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PELAYO:

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.

A ROMANCE.

BY ISABEL, *author of*

Oh, lovely Spain! renown'd romantic land!
Where is that standard which Pelagio bore?

CHILDE HAROLD.

No holier place than Covadonga, Spain
Boasts in her wide extent; though all her realms,
Be with the noblest blood of martyrdom
In elder or in later days enrich'd.

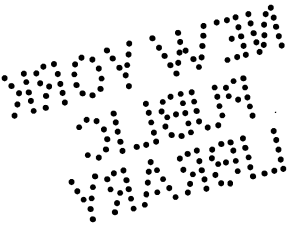
SOUTHEY.

NEW-YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS,

82 CLIFF-STREET.

.....

1836.



P R E F A C E .

“THE Rubicon is passed !” my shallop launched upon the bosom of the waters ; with what hopes, and what fears, alternately, to sink, and bear it up, they who for the first time have braved the tempest’s fury best can tell. In offering a tale *entirely* fictitious—the mere glittering day-dream of a youthful fancy—to the enlightened public, I should indeed call down censure heavy upon my head ; indeed wrong the judgment of the literary world to suppose they would give it more than its deserts—a passing thought.

The following Romance is founded strictly upon historical facts. The name of “*Peñero*,” to every Spanish ear, will long be a hallowed sound. Both Southey and Don Trueba (author of the Romance of Spain) have used their best endeavours to immortalize this renowned warrior. But as they very materially disa-

gree in some of the leading points, I have chosen for my tale the accounts which Don Trueba gives.

Pelayo was successor to Roderick the "Last of the Goths:" in 718 he was elected King of Asturias;—that there are remarkable incidents connected with the history of his sister, they both agree upon; but wide indeed is the gulf between their different relations. Southey paints her—the sister of the noble Pelayo—as the paramour of her enemy, one that

"rather seemed to woo
The upstart renegado, than wait his wooing."

and as "spurning gentle admonition." The sex are forever indebted to him for his complaisance; certes, those lines have immortalized his name, for—what woman can ever read them, and having read, forget the author? Don Trueba has laid out a path far more befitting the sister of a warrior; and him have I followed.

Any further remark respecting the *Poet Laureate's* conception were vain;—of course, that celebrated personage (for Byron has too skilfully trumpeted his name in satire to let it die,) knows best what belongs to the sister of a noble-minded king; (so at least we might suppose considering he is *Poet Laureate*.)—With all due deference to his superior merits—his un-

blemished character—his far-famed distinction in the *political* world—and his *strict adherence* to his “buff and blue,” I merely beg to differ with him ; and all the world knows that is but a *woman’s* privilege with every body.

To the Critic and the Sage I do not pretend to offer this little work,—the latter would merely toss the book aside in “lofty disdain ;” but—Pope has too well taught that the former is “all ready made,” for me to expect from him such *mercy*. Even now, in my fancy’s eye, I see him wipe, with careful hand, his grass-green spectacles, (no fear of their falling off this time, for his most conspicuous feature is turned so far upwards that it seems to implore the heavens to look down in wrathful vengeance upon such detestable nonsense,) and with a supercilious sneer—a curl of the *lip* so haughty ’t were worthy the pencil of a Raphael—an emphatic, well-conned “bah !” ejaculated at every other line—after reading half a page, grasp, in eager haste, a snow-white sheet of paper, *gilt-edged* of course ; (as though he were determined, at least in that, to be like Rousseau,) and now—see how his look darkens, and his brows knit ; the paper grows black beneath his touch ! Envy steals to one side, and, with her wormwood branch, adds venom to every line ; while Prudence, on the other, half with-

holds his hand, as though to warn him 't is a *woman*
he attacks, whispering

"I lose my patience, and I own it too,
When works are censured, not as bad—but new."

'T is done! "Up, Harry! Thomas! John! ho, there! to the printer! the work shall die with a stroke of my pen!" Just listen, gentle ladies, to his sonorous voice, "crackling with passion;" verily this thunder-burst outrivals Lord Douglass's "Up draw-bridge! Grooms! what, warder ho! let the portcullis fall!" when he would gladly have had Marmion killed with a stroke of the ponderous gate; just as this friendly critic would ring my death-knell with the spattering of his quill. But, mark well what followed; Douglass was defeated, and Marmion escaped unscathed;—shall ISABEL be less fortunate? but still we differ a little; he—put spurs to his steed; I—shall turn and face my enemy! I may not be brushed aside by "paper bullets of the brain," and for his "question fierce," he'll meet a "proud reply!" To one—to all the sour Critic train, I fling defiance! my gauntlet lies upon the ground—and he who dares may pick it up—but let the venturous swain come strongly armed, lest it prove again "The defeat of Marinell."

According to its merit, my tale will live, or die; and

“being public, the public must judge.” But—if it perish in the waters of oblivion—why let it—what care I? ’t will only prove a Phenix from whose ashes another, and a lovelier bird shall rise. ’T is said “that Pegasus kicks and plunges when mounted by a novice,”—I feared the lion-mettled rogue, and wisely shunned him; my Muse is but a pedestrian lady, at the best; she tells you (that is, to all amicable hearers,) a simple tale, nor seeks to build “in lofty rhyme;”—if there *are* rhymes, they came unbid, unbid were writ. I have not offered a *Poem* to the public, and cannot be censured upon that score. The first words of the Critic are ever as certain to be, a sour “Bah!”—“Great want of rhyme,”—“Abundance of alliteration,” &c. as those of our “exquisites,” just pouring from the perfumer’s shops, are—“Fine evening to-night,”—“hem,”—“been to the play,”—“hem,” “hem;” “hot, miserable, detestable—that d—d theatre!” “hem,” “hem,” “hem,”—and after a long and awful pause, during which, Silence seems to have stabbed lively Conversation to the heart,—“Read Bulwer’s last?”—amazingly sentimental,—“quite the go.”

I shall answer the first assertion of this Rhadamanthus judge, by referring him to the numerous instances

of want of rhyme in the most beautiful passages of our celebrated authors. Par exemple :

"False wizard, avaunt ! I have marshalled my clan,
Their swords are a thousand, their bosoms are one," (anc.)
CAMPBELL.

"They would have crossed themselves all mute,
But at the stamping of my foot," (fute.)
CAMPBELL.

"That stood the storm when waves were rough,
Yet in a sunny hour fell off," (ouf.)
MOORE.

"They lay them down to rest,
With corselet laced," (lest.)
SCOTT.

"Yet write me all, that I may join, (jine)
Griefs to thy griefs, and echo sighs to thine."
POPE.

"Wild beasts in iron yokes he could compel,
The pardale swift and tiger cruel." (elle.)
SPENCER.

"And though I solemnly declare,
I knew no more than my Lord Mayor," (mare.)
SWIFT.

"Went where he pleased, said what he thought,
Not rich, but owed no man a groat," (grougt.)
SWIFT.

These are but a few which strike me at the moment,

from among many I could select—perhaps you will answer, “Yes, but these are only errors of the great.” Read then the following lines from Byron, and if they do not satisfy you, why—when I am called upon for more, I shall not shrink from answering :

“But hold!” exclaims a friend, “here’s some neglect;

This, that, and t’ other line are incorrect!”

“What then? the self-same blunder Pope has got,

And careless Dryden,”—“Ay—but Pye has not;”

“Indeed! ’t is granted, faith—but what care I?

Better to *err* with *Pope*, than *shine* with *Pye*.”

As respects alliteration, in my humble opinion, ’t is oftener a beauty than a fault—instances of this, I have also derived from celebrated authors;—but why need I further fatigue, with the detail, those who are convinced? They who are not, shall have—(what every Lady of Honour, as well as gentleman, should give) “*Satisfaction*.”

In this “Golden Age,” (or age of *Gold*) I should indeed be presumptuous to suppose such “unprofitable stuff” as rhymes could ever be *vendable*—unless indeed, with patched robe, of many hues, and killing Gipsy bonnet, I myself went singing them about the streets; for, you see, I have not even afforded *gilt edges* to make the pill go down;—but—if it will enhance their humble value, be it known to those that

take interest in them, that both *Dedication* and *Tale* were written and finished before Isabel had completed her *seventeenth* year; and the only hasty revision they ever had, previous to being put in the printer's hands, was immediately after.—I am as conscious of their innumerable faults as the severest judge could be; yet those who look with lenient eyes may again hear
from

ISABEL.

INTRODUCTION.



INTRODUCTION.

TO THE

HONOURABLE DUDLEY SELDEN.

NEW-YORK, MARCH 2, 1836.

THE voice of Spring is on the gale,
Winter hath ceased his stormy wail,
And wild birds sing, and flowers blow,
And ev'ry living thing doth glow,
Beneath her fairy step and genial brow ;
It is an hour of glee and mirth,
Sweet Nature ! thy returning birth :
When savage Winter scowled, with front severe,
E'en the bright fireside might fail to cheer—

But now—that steps are light, and hearts are gay,
Beneath thy gladd'ning empire's short-lived ray,
I usher forth my wild—my untuned lay,
While yet thy cheering voice remains,
With magic wand to give it charms,
That my coy muse forgot to bring,
So short th' untor'd siren's song.
And thou—for whom I strike my lyre—
With rude hand wake its new-born fire—
Do'st thou not welcome, too, the hour,
Whose gentle breath's reviving power
Unlocks the steely breast of man,
And bids his softer feelings freely flow,
Unfetter'd by the narrow span,
That pinching Winter dooms them oft to know ?
For, now that Nature opes the heart,
The Orator may play his part,
E'en Spring herself is eloquent,
And seems to favour his intent ;
Statesman and patriot now may gain
What long they 've struggled for in vain ;
Ay, e'en the Poet now may soar,
And with the perfumed breath of Spring,
Dare herald in the humble lore,

.

That from her rosy-tinted wing
Stole hues it never knew before.—
And thou—with Stateman's head—and Patriot's
heart—
Say, can the feeble murm'rings of my strain
To thee one little hour of joy impart?
For, Patriot and Statesman, sure may deign
To listen to the Muse's luring art :—
In ages long to come—when thy spirit and when mine
have flown,
Great Washington (though yet unsung) shall be re-
vered and known !
For Glory was his Muse—and living in her breath,
How can he ever feel the blighting touch of death ?
The laurel wreath that circles round his brow
Fades not—nor withers—though the front that
bore—
The thousand hearts that bowed before—
That token once—in days of yore—
Save few—all, in the dust, alike, are low !
He still'd th' invaders' voice, and curbed their ruthless
hand ;
He waved the olive branch o'er this our happy land ;

And can his memory, ever, ever part
From where 't is shrined in every patriot's heart?
E'en as the burning meteor's course, his bright career--
Yet register'd in heaves—and unforgotten here—

For him Fame's trumpet long shall sound,
Each lisping child shall bless his name,
Each noble breast shall burst to flame,
Each mother's heart shall beat again,
And waken shall each minstrel's strain,
Whene'er the hallowed words go round,
Of " Washington and Liberty ! "

Of " Washington—the Father of the free ! "
Like his—the Patriot's unchain'd heart be ever thine !
Like his—the soul that for thy country's weal shall
shine !

But can that heart, from such a noble theme, incline
To listen to my lowly rhyme?
The bird doth want some guardian hand,
To shield him hov'ring on the strand,
Ere he can soar, oh ! strengthen first his wing !
Ere he can warble, teach him first to sing !
Then be it thine, the guardian hand,
That shield's me hov'ring on the strand ;

Be thine to aid my yet weak wing,
Thine to sustain my minstrel song ;
The skill of classic rhyme I little know,
Uncurb'd and free my tale—my thoughts—must
flow—

Soon as I show my muse the rein,
She wings her way to heaven again ;
But when I boldly touch the chords, and wake
My wild, untuned ideas, and let them take
Their own—untutor'd strain—
Once more th' enchantress' voice is heard,
Though wilder than the shrill sea-bird
Her harsh notes ever ring.—

'T was nature taught me first to rhyme,
And my impatient, restless muse,
To pen my thoughts scarce gives me time,
And pruning wholly doth refuse,
And when I count—takes wing !
'T is not the *head* that I 'd disarm,
The *heart* oh ! rather let me charm.—
While, still in life's gay morning spring,
I launch upon the world my song.
For yet the sun hath never risen, I ween,
To hail (nay, do not smile,) me *seventeen* !

Yet would that I could meet with many a heart,
Which ever loves the simple minstrel's art,
Who 'd pass my countless faults most gently by,
Because they did not strike the *heart*, but *eye* ;
And yet—when “green-eyed” critics vent their
spite—

As candidly I do confess they might,
With justice too—yet think not that because my
name

Is hidden 'neath a friendly cloud,
(Until enwreath'd with fame that can itself sustain)
That I will shrink—and bend—and hide my head in
shame—

No! from my sure, though fleecy shroud,
Send arrows forth will shoot them through,
Unknowing yet from whence they flew ;
But—as immortal Scott would say,
(Forgive me, heaven! that with his rhymes I
play)

“ Before you strip him for the race,
Show the *conditions* of the chase.”
'T is known to ev'ry word a man* can say,

* For critics ever must be *men*—
What *gentle fair* the art could ken ?

A *woman* glibly answers two,
And I would have ye critics see,
'T is even thus, in sooth, with me ;
And if ye dare the race—with you.
Long as I wield a pen at will,
Vainly o'er me your spleen is flung ;
Brave men ! to meet a woman's tongue,
Or weapon worse—her goose's quill—
For sometimes quills, and tongues they say,
Have power worse in present day,
 Than once had keen-edged swords ;
Full many a sturdy soul I know,
Upon this mingled world below,
Who less doth fear the dagger's blow,
 Than wilful woman's words !—
But hush !—I think I hear a voice that calls away,
Alas ! my muse has said, “ no more to day ! ”
Poor victim ! I her mandate must obey ;
And, Selden ! now, a last farewell !
Lend a kind ear to

ISABEL.



PELAYO:

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.

CANTO FIRST.

..

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PELAYO :

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.

CANTO FIRST.

I.

'Tis sweet, when ev'ning's shades are closing round,
To hear the laurell'd victor's trumpet sound;
 'Tis sweet to seek the couch of rest,
 When by a light gay heart 't is prest
 In balmy sleep, sweet dreams for guest:
The warrior whose army gains the day—
The labourer at eve who whistles gay—
The miser counting o'er his hoard with joy—
The father sporting with his laughing boy—
The maid whose gentle bosom knows to swell,
When tolls at ev'ning's hour the vesper-bell,
And her fond lover whispers his farewell—
The rosy infant hush'd upon its mother's breast—
The very dog that sinks before the door to rest—

All! hail the ev'ning's close;
The hour for calm repose
Is sweet to such as those!

II.

But though that hour of peace and rest is come,
And sinks beneath the western hills the sun,
And in the heavens fades its roseate glow,
Yet stormy is the Moorish Chieftain's brow;
Such sleep, such soothing dreams he cannot know;—
But why? The war he waged hath not been vain;
His sword hath waved victorious o'er the plain
Where on their bloody couch his foes lie slain;
He hath reap'd the harvest of his spoils,
And the hour has come when end his toils;
Now may he seek the merry banquet's revelry,
Or from the wine-cup's sparkling brim drink cheerily,
Or rest his wearied head
Upon his gorgeous bed.—
To him, alas! the ev'ning hour no respite brings,
For busy fancy never tires her wings,
But still with vain desires his bosom wrings:
Though laurel wreaths his temples bind,
Still doth the canker gnaw his mind—
The more he gains, his hopes the higher soar—
Ambition's unquench'd flame but thirsts the more,
Tow'ring beyond the skies
At each new gained prize:
Alas! how soon, when won,
'Twill lose its gilded charm!—
It naught avails that thousands bow the knee,
And yield him all the meed of victory—

Boots not the trophy, won in glory's name,
The gorgeous splendour of his fair domain;—
Chill discontent, with visage pale,
Snatches away the fairy veil;
In ev'ry joy her arrow flings;
With each new spoil new venom brings.
The humble lab'rer at his cottage hearth
Knows not the empty void, the chilling dearth,
That fills such chieftain's breast,
And robs him of his rest.—
Far sooner might we envy him
Than yon proud lord, whose ev'ry whim
Granted ere scarce 'tis told,
Palling as soon, grows cold.

III.

When ev'ning dews begin to rise,
His toil and labour done,
The former seeks for calm repose
Within his cottage home;
As through the field he gaily plods his way,
Reviews with joy the labours of the day,
Nor wishes more than he has got,
And that by his own toil was bought :
The bread is sweet his labours earn,
And sweet his sleep when labour 's done ;
No furrow on his brow is traced by care ;
She flies before his frank and joyous air :—
He envies not the wealth of kings ;
The produce that his toiling brings,
The riches that from earth's kind bosom springs,

The golden harvest she bestows,
Is all the wealth he asks or knows.
Contentment, peace, and joviality,
Are beaming in his sparkling, sprightly eye,
The ruddy glow of health is on his cheek,
And all his looks calm happiness bespeak.
And when he reaches his cottage hearth,
What scenes of joy and heart-felt mirth,
What greetings warm, meet his return,
And all his raptured senses charm!

IV.

Oh! ye who call earth dull and void of charms, who
feel
Few hours of bliss along life's clouded path may steal,
Come now, and let your fancy gently glide,
To peep with me at his gay fire-side;
Come, view the young and tender woman there,
Whose spotless brow scarce knows the touch of care,
One hand in his—the other clasp'd
Around the smiling infant on her breast,
Whose soft and dimpled cheek to hers is prest;
On him she turns her beaming smile,
Warm from a heart that ne'er knew guile,
And he would spurn the pride of monarch's life,
Unshared, unsoothed by that adoring wife.
Enough e'en in that very thought to chase away
Your vain imaginings and welcome joy's glad ray.

V.

And when at night he sinks to rest,
By no aspiring thoughts oppress,

His sleep—his joyful dreams—what must they be ?
Sweet—but not sweeter than reality !—

And gently thus his bark glides down

Life's troubled wayward tide ;

The name of grief is scarcely known,

Or aught of care beside.

Ye, who have been toss'd on life's billowy surge,

On the uncertain waves, that one moment urge

To hope's wide harbour seen anear—

Then leave you victims of despair,

To whom joys fleeting hour

Like the stray sunbeam's glimpse hath been,

Whose momentary ray is seen

To light some ruin'd tower,

Then fade in storm and rain,

No more to shine again!—

Pause! If ever such as ye

Like cottage scene should see;

For though you chanced to be

Of birth and high degree,

You'd envy such as they,

And gladly change life's anxious cares

For joy as calm, as sweet as theirs.

VI.

But roving fancy, ever free,

In dreams of their futurity,

Has let me stray

Too far away ;

Forgive me, gentle reader, if I rove

To dwell on calm content and wedded love,

When my tale's not of the cottage's sweet repose,

But must the scenes of bloody war disclose.

'Tis mine to paint the noisy strife
Of higher—but less happy life—
And my pen must stop no more
At the humble cottage door.

VII.

But if I spoke of faithful love,—
Soldier or statesman—who 'll reprove ?
“'Tis love that rules the world;” we all do know;
For who so cold that hath not felt his glow?
If, reader, thou'rt a maiden fair,
With hopes of conquest flutt'ring near,
True love to thee 's a pleasing theme,
Subject of many a waking dream:—
But if he who scans these lines
To bachelor's years inclines,
If age's silver snow
Begins to shade his brow,
'T will please him to forget,
He is not wedded yet:
And if mem'ry still her empire hold,
I can encourage him that's old;
Love cannot see the whiten'd hairs,
Love cannot count the number'd years:
The boy is blind—I do assure thee so—
Then why, my friend, discourage such as thou?—
But, whither do my thoughts away?
Enough! I must no longer stray;
Return again, kind Muse, I pray!
Come robed in all thy loftiest pow'r,
Assist me in the trying hour;
For gaiety would ill beseem
My present dark and bloody theme.

VIII.

Fond woman's strong enduring love,
'Tis mine to paint, and mine to prove:
And fain I 'd make the name in triumph ring
Of brave Pelayo, Covadonga's King!
The boldest, "bravest of the brave,"
Whose mighty arm was raised to save
Fair Spain, his native land,
From the tyrant's ruthless hand,
And dash to earth the shackling chain
That o'er her wild and wide domain
Had thrown a dark and bloody stain!
His eagle spirit long hath wing'd its flight
To scenes eternally serene and bright;
Yet, still that spirit's light is shed beneath.—
Though warriors yield their latest breath
On the embattled plain—yet death
Conquers alone the frame of earth,—
The soul of glory cannot die,
Or the name enshrined in victory!

IX.

Come, lonely bachelor, or gentle maid,
If Cupid round thy heart hath ever play'd,
Let fancy feel his shafts again,
For if they stung—was 't not sweet pain?
Come read my lay, perchance 't will wake the heart's
soft chord once more,
Renewing in the love that others felt, thy flame of yore;
Come, you whose locks are changed to white,
You who have known affliction's blight,

Upon whose hoary head each silver hair
Has been the offspring of a sep'rate care,*
 Would that my lay had pow'r to cheer
 Hearts that, like thine, are in their sear :
 Come then—mine will be sweet reward,
 If from thy lips shall burst one word
That tells my efforts have not all been vain,
And the feelings of thy youth revive again—
 Auspicious, listen to my tale!
 Perchance with some it may not fail,
 To wing more light a heavy hour,
 And chase "dull care" away;
 For much she fears the Muse's pow'r,
 And fades before her lay.

X.

'Twas night ! the wide and gorgeous palace hall
 Blazed with a thousand glitt'ring lights,
And jewell'd shields and sabres deck'd the wall,
 The spoils of brave though bloody fights.
'Neath a rich canopy of azure blue,
 With snow-white ermine bound,
 And girt in drap'ry round,
With darts and javelins of golden hue,
 The chieftain's form reclined.
Stretch'd on a sumptuous couch, in stately pride,
 He seem'd the lord of all creation wide;
His martial dress, exchanged for one of cloth of gold,
Appear'd his form with lucid lustre to enfold,

* The authoress, when very young, on playfully noticing the gray hairs of an old gentleman, was told by him that each one was the result of some particular sorrow.

And studded thick with diamonds rare,
Sparkled with so rich, so bright a glare,
That you might deem the mimic stars shone there.

XI.

But pomp, and splendour, all combined,
Ne'er chased the shadow from his mind,
The baneful serpent from his heart,
That rankling there, with venom'd smart,
Quench'd the fierce lightning of his warrior eye,
No longer gleaming now as proud and high
As when, 'mid raging war's alarms,
He was the first to rush to arms,
And bathe in Christian blood his Moorish hands,
And basely rob them of their fertile lands.

XII.

Around him stood his warriors brave,
Who oft, when serried armies hid the ground,
Their chieftain's life to shield or save,
Had giv'n their fearless breasts to the lance's wound,
And caught th' avenging blow
That would have laid him low.—
And now, though waving plumes no longer shade
His lofty and majestic brow,
Still are his looks as fiercely dark and dread,
As when opposed against the foe.
In vain, with anxious care,
His vassals strove to share
His fearful thoughts;
In vain the weary hours beguiled
With many a tale or legend wild;

Cold, listless, and unmoved,
No look from the chieftain proved
That he scarce listen'd to their lore ;
And his visage still the impress wore
Of gloom, deep fix'd upon his mind,
Of hoarded grief, closely enshrined
Within a breast, that ill its burthen bore.

XIII.

Yet, ever and anon, a wild uncertain fire,
Waked by some dread untold desire,
Though scarcely kindling now in ire,
Flash'd in his fierce dark eye,
Like vivid light'ning o'er the sky,
A moment bright, then doom'd to die !—
His dusky hands were closely clench'd ;
His haughty lip was proudly curl'd ;
Hand—that in gore had late been drench'd ;
Lips—that seem'd form'd to rule a world !—
His glittering crescent, one massive brilliant gem,
Shone brighter than the sun's gay diadem ;
But, low'ring 'neath, his stormy brow
Was marble-cold as alpine snow ;
And heavy clouds, that bursting seem'd,
Hung round so black, that you had deem'd,
Their fall would overwhelm
The noblest in his realm.—
Yet, 't was not so—on one alone
Must their pent fury now be shown ;
And that, a maiden fair,—
Sorrowing and oppress—
A lone and radiant star,—
Young, captive, and distress,—

She scorn'd his love—she scorn'd his pow'r—
Nor thought perchance, in some dark hour,
That force might make her his.—

A princess once—a princess now no more—
Robb'd of her regal state—by his curst hand,
Made captive in her loved, her native land,
Her heart shrank from the vows so warmly breathed
By lips, that oft, alas ! betray'd—deceived—
And what was cold indifference before,
To proud disdain—disgust—had turn'd, nay more,
To loathing hate—and, oh ! when woman's breast
Holds sepulchred that wrathful demon guest,
Fear—tremble ye!—on whom the hand of fate
Hath turn'd its venom'd force, her power to prove !
Earth—holds no passion strong as woman's love,
Nor hell—a fiend more deadly than her hate !

XIV.

Yet all in vain the conqu'ror strove to banish from his
heart

The image that in ev'ry wish or thought had form'd a
part ;

For, midnight visions, more beguiling far
Than oft the dreams of sober day-light are,
Would paint her, not in all her pride,
But, gently yielding when he sued ;
With all the coyness still that charms,
Yet all the softness that disarms.—

Thus Hope [ah ! false, beguiling maid !] with smiles
would lure him on,

To gain a prize, that Reason whisper'd never could
be won.

Alas! 't was fancy, mystic fancy, all—

The bright cloud sped—the dream soon fled,—
Reality had doom'd the veil to fall.

The chief, before whose presence stern

The boldest warrior bow'd the knee,

Must now the bitter lesson learn:

Love is not won so easily.

On pinions light he still would flee,

Spite of a *chieftain's* stern decree,

And soon he found that splendour could not buy

The shrinking maiden's love ;

Or the fierce glance of his commanding eye

The magic circlet weave,

Whose potency could bind

Unwilling heart and hand :

Then, ah ! where shall he find

That talismanic band ?

XV.

Such thoughts, like clouds, swept o'er his breast,

And ruled by turns with wild, unsettled sway,

But none reveal'd or peace or rest ;

His mood but deeper grew—for no glad ray

Glanced, like a meteor quick and bright,

To drop hope's anchor in his sight,

And change to-day his gloomy night ;

But, like a shipwreck'd mariner, at sea,

Toss'd on the ocean's billows wild,

Who grasps in vain at ev'ry feeble stay,

Until, by hope no more beguiled,

He sees the phantom bid adieu !

As grim despair blackens in view:

Thus sat the chief, musing on hope,
Though with despair he had to cope.

XVI.

Many a warrior brave, and tall,
In glitt'ring armour cased—
That vast illuminated hall,
Proudly majestic graced!—
Yet, fearful each beheld
The deep gloom, that unquell'd
Grew blacker on their chief's stern brow—
They saw his dark eye darker grow,
And his swarthy cheek with crimson glow,
[Herald of storms that lurk'd below.]
Then strove to stay his ire—and quench the kindling
fire,
But turn'd, despairing, hopeless, from the task,
Unknowing what to offer—what to ask.

XVII.

At length, a veteran by his side,
Whose head was wreathed in age's snow,
Th' unwonted look and scowl descried,
And sought his cause of grief to know.
Munuza had he known full long, and well,
Yet now in doubt he paused to gaze awhile,
Whisper'd then, " Let his Harem's Pride this tem-
pest quell,—
Fondly Munuza loves the fair one's smile ;
Well is she skill'd in woman's wile,
At once, can rivet—charm—beguile."

Alas! 't was fancy, mystic fancy, all—

The bright cloud sped—the dream soon fled,—
Reality had doom'd the veil to fall.

The chief, before whose presence stern

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Must now the bitter lesson learn:

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Who grasps in vain for aid

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Far—far—outshone the light of gems,
The brilliancy of diadems !

XIX.

Scarce sixteen summers' bloom had shed
O'er her young brow its rich'ning glory,
And yet, her heart was fondly wed
With one whose locks would soon be hoary—
Yon haughty chief, her first—fond love—
The earliest feelings of her bosom held—
And will he now a recreant prove ?
And is his passion's flame already quell'd ?
Ambition tempts—and fickle Love takes wing ;—
When the vulture's nigh—the dove will cease to sing ;
The strong temptation weighs the scale—
His heart is like the summer's gale,
That steals the sweetness from the rose,
While fondly ling'ring where it grows—
Then seeks the fragrance of another flower,
And leaves it too—to droop within an hour !

XX.

But though no diamond sparkled bright
'Mid Aza's long and jetty hair—
Nor on her robe of simple white
Glitter'd or gem or jewel there—
Yet of all the bright harem she was the pride,
And Munuza once would have made her his bride ;
But another, unknowingly, had won
The heart she fondly thought her own.
Ah! when the dreadful truth is known,

Must changed affection's withering blight
For ever cloud in sorrow's night
The glory of her laughing eye !
And dim the brow so careless and so free—
And rend her bosom with the sigh
That speaks the victim of inconstancy ?
Yet, is she beautiful as blushing morn—
Bright as the rising sun's first golden beam—
A flower that would the cot or throne adorn—
A seraph too divine for earth's cold realm !
For o'er her beauty's virgin-spring
Sorrow has yet no shadow flung,
Nor one light touch of care's dark wing,
In grief, a pearly tear-drop wrung
From eyes—that ne'er have beam'd one fleeting ray,
Save in young innocence and purity !

XXI.

The moon is fair and bright—but palely shines ;
In her no emblem Aza's beauty finds—
But, look upon the dazzling sun,
When first its colours 'gin to dawn—
And herald in the coming morn—
And you will see an emblem fit,
For Aza's beauty, Aza's wit !
Then, mark the fleecy clouds of snow
Tinged by its splendour's roseate hue,
And well you'll know the modest glow
That crimsons o'er her cheeks
Whene'er she moves or speaks !—
And would you see her lightsome step—
Go view the fawn o'er green lawns leap ;

Or hear her frolic laugh ring full of life—
List to the air with joyous music rife !
Or see the holy light enthroned upon her brow—
Behold the varying tints whose colours glow⁴
In the token of a God—the arch'd rainbow !—

XXII.

Her eyes were beaming black, but, fill'd with rich
warm light,
Glitter'd like silver stars in heaven's darkest night,
And fainting seem'd with loveliness !
But when she moved—or danced—or spoke—
Quickly the slumb'ring soul awoke !
Two living fires flashing seem'd
Where those dark orbs had mildly beam'd !
Sparkling in ev'ry glance, her soul
Burst joyous forth beyond control,
Still glowing bright
In strange despite
Of long dark lashes, that in envy swept
Her cheek,—half veiling eyes that ne'er had wept,
Save at some mournful tale of others' wo—
For what of tears or anguish could she know ?—

XXIII.

No dazzling train deserved her page's care ;
Her lute—whose sounds had often charm'd the ear
Of that loved chief—alone he bore :—
Nor had *she* a single moment stopp'd to bind
The ringlets that, with wild luxuriance, twined
In mazes rich her snowy bosom round,

Or in shadowy darkness, half o'ercast,
 'Mid gleams of light, her brilliant brow !
 And half her fragile form enclasp'd*
 Shading her neck of spotless snow !—
 With fairy step she bounded on her way,
 But lighter than the swallow skims the bay,
 While dimpling smiles, in soft expression play'd
 Round lips---that seem'd from Venus' model made—
 Like two young rose-buds bursting new,
 All sparkling wet with morning dew !
 She heeded not th' admiring gaze
 On ev'ry side that met her eye,---
 But flitted like a vision by,---
 Unconscious of the dazzling blaze
 Of pomp---and light---and jewelry!
 Until before the chief she stood,
 Then, half she knelt in playful mood,
 And half her balmy lips to his she press'd,
 And with arch simplicity her lord caress'd !
 Then tore a flow'ret from the white jas'mine wreath,
 Her silky locks that bound---

* Methinks, I hear the surly critic wisely cry,
 "What rhymes ! what lines ! by heaven's justice they defy
 "The rules of Murray !—alias poesie !"

Be this thy answer, learned man of wisdom's school,
 Who write—dispute—and criticise—by rule.
 Thou noble type of Minos' equity!
 If, through such narrow spectacles you see,
 Nor rhyme, nor poesy you'll find in me ;
 Then throw the book aside—'t was not for thee,
 Great Sage ! my free-born lay was penn'd ;
 Too much thou hast already scann'd—
 For I've outgrown or broke my leading-string,
 And laugh to scorn thy cham'd pedantic wing :
 Free as the wind my muse must flow,
 And less to sound than sense bestow :
 For if she went by rules, like Dr. Pangloss and like thee,
 She'd never rise above thy morbid insipidity.

And waved it high,—and shed its scented breath
Upon the air around !

XXIV.

An instant—and his iron brow unbent ;
To her gay childishness the chieftain lent,
By turns, a pleased and list'ning ear ;
His looks—before morose—severe—
Like wintry shadows fled !
Unwonted smiles o'erspread
The cheek that, glowing red,
Seem'd its best hue to wear,
To welcome one so fair !—
Deep, deep from beauty's fount he drank
The sweet—the soul-entrancing spell—
That Aza knew to weave so well,
Ne'er thinking that the poison sank
Her own confiding breast to chill !

XXV.

Ah ! who so cold to beauty's melting eye,
That could not e'er forgive th' impassion'd sigh,
Warm from the raptur'd heart that burst,
Although another love it nurst ?
For who could calmly view
The living---breathing---gladness of her air,
Nor harbour thought untrue
To one, perchance, as fond—perchance, as fair ?
Could mortal gaze upon her sylphlike form
And dream with aught but seraph life 't was warm ?
Or, hear the accents soft that fell—
As sweet as Music's murm'ring swell—

And lit her radiant face---
 With a witching---nameless grace---
 While ev'ry word reveal'd the matchless mind,
 Majestic---pure---refined,
 Such as in angels' bosoms is enshrined!
 Nor think her creature of a nobler sphere---
 Sent but to charm or warn us mortals here---
 Or, perchance, a sylph, or fay,
 Such as in the moonlight stray,
 And weave their spells, as legends say,
 To snare the wand'ers on their way!
 With syren charms,
 Who work their harms---
 Then wing their flight, through misty night,
 To realms of light, for earth too bright.

XXVI.

Such, even such, was she---
 Who loved so fervently
 The despot chief.
 Loved! ay! with all that deep, enduring faith,
 That savours more of heaven's truth---than earth;
 That confides---unshadow'd by a flickering doubt,---
 And spurns the splendours of a throne---without
 A true and faithful heart
 To share in joy a part.
 But charms like hers---though ev'ry hour bright'ning---
 Seem'd to have lost the magic of their light'ning,
 When o'er his mind another vision rose---and the
 dream
 Of love flow'd lightly o'er ambition's golden stream:
 'T is true---the Gothic princess he ador'd---

But, well, too well he knew, if once her lord,
The Christians all would in submission bow,
In honour of their princess' marriage-vow.
Such thoughts engross his calculating mind :—
The strife of love with interest combined—
For not of noble mould was he,
From all debasing motives free ;
But rather one who 'd love---as he would fight ;
All for a meed,—
Nor cared, though darker than cimmerian night
The bloody deed :—
Who better loved the spoils of war,
And higher prized its golden store,
Than the victor's laurel wreath,
Or immortal Glory's weakh !

XXVII.

And though when wrapp'd in heavy gloom,
Her presence for a moment cheer'd---
The frowns would all return too soon,
And looks---that even Aza fear'd :—
The viper, gnawing at the bosom's core,
When the o'erburthen'd heart is flowing o'er,
Will yield one moment's joyful peace,
Its store of venom to increase.—
Thus 't was with him—fair Aza's form
A moment quell'd the gath'ring storm—
But short, as sunshine of an April day,
As rainbow hues, that swiftly pass away !
Nor Aza's wooing smiles---
Nor Aza's playful wiles---

Could long the sunshine keep,
Or hush the storm to sleep ;—
The gladness vanish'd from his brow,
And vanish'd too the crimson glow,
That flush'd his cheek, with hectic streak ;
His knitting front—his lips grown ashy pale---
Are heralds of the near tempestuous gale,
Which, like the simoom's blighting breath,
Where'er it chance to fall—brings death!

XXVIII.

Sternly and proud he motion'd with his hand,
Nor dared she disobey that dread command ;
The arms that fondly twined around
His neck, their snowy clasp unbound,
And loose and listless hung,
As the lute's chords unstrung,
Whose melody hath wrung,
In music sweet its parting knell,
And bid to harmony---farewell !
Or like the ivy sever'd from the oak,
By th' unheeding woodman's cruel stroke,
Whose thread of life---that one rude blow---hath broke!
What pen has power or art to trace,
The thoughts that clouded Aza's face,
When thus she felt her fond embrace
Rejected by her loved—her chosen one ?—
Better to have ne'er beheld the morning sun,
Or breathed the air of life,
Than she to know its strife !
In vain her quiv'ring lip would force a smile---
The scalding tears were bursting all the while!

Yet---there are minds that can restrain---
And to the heart chase back again
The gushing tear---the throb of pain---
That dry the eye---and then forget,
A moment since with tears 't was wet:—
Scarce had young Aza known she wept
When Conscience in her bosom leapt,
Whispering, “Has not reason slept?
“Forbear, forbear—chase back thy tear,
'T is thine to charm, and thine to cheer;
“Say when hath woman's art been all in vain?
“Then why despair?—renew thy powers again.”

XXIX.

She turn'd—her eye was sparkling dry,
Like some bright sunny flower,
Bedew'd by April shower,
O'er which the wooing zephyrs blow,
And kiss the dew drops as they glow!
Her quiv'ring lip was still---
Calm was her bosom's swell!
She cast one look on him—
And were his heart less cold than snow,
Encircling Torneo's icy brow,
It would have melted then!
A look---so fraught with hope and love---
So thrilling---that the saints above
Might think it off'ring meet for Jove!
Yet he on whom its radiance fell,
No answ'ring glance return'd, to tell
He felt the magic of its spell!

XXX.

Though Aza, like the antelope, was sportive, wild,—
Elate with all the buoyant lightness of a child—
Each soft maturer grace possess'd of woman mild.

Of famed Circassia's sunny clime
She was the fairest of the thronging fair ;
Each charm now ripen'd to divine,
She rank'd the first, the brightest everywhere ;
With untutor'd elegance she charm'd,
With spotless innocence disarm'd
The venom'd shaft that malice flung—
The deadlier bane of slander's tongue !
Conscious of purity—she still was nerved
To meet the galling look she ill deserved,
And meet it with as calm an eye
As e'er before—

And let it glance unheeded by.
Dark clouds may hide the sunbeam from the snow,
But have they power to taint its virgin glow ?

XXXI.

A thought ran through her whirling brain,
Then to her page she turn'd again,
And quickly seized her lute—
The chords, no longer mute,
Burst forth in tuneful harmony !
A wild sweet flood of melody
Now—vibrates on the silver strings,
As if awaked by angels' wings !
And now—in fading murmurs floats,
Soft as the swan's last dying notes,

When, half expiring, the gifted bird
In music's melting strains is heard.—
The shading locks all back she flings,
As from the chords the music rings!
Her soul entranced breathes in the soft melodious strain,
And, to and fro, her bounding bosom heaves again!

E'en to her snowy brow
Mounts swift the crimson glow!
And wilder—brighter—than before,
Now flash her dark, expressive eyes!
Read in that raptured look told o'er,
A spirit worthy of the skies,—
Read all that's passionate—that's wild—
And mark her well—she's nature's child!
Does not the lustrous eye—the flushed and burning
cheek—

The vivid soul—the likeness of the lightning speak?
And now that softer than descending snow,
Melt the sounds in melody away,
Is there not love in the deep'ning crimson glow,
The fond eyes curtain'd brilliancy?
There is—the gently murm'ring stream,
That glitters in the sun's gay beam,
Runs deep—and, hidden 'neath its flow,
The golden veins may lurk below.

XXXII.

Her chisell'd hand steals lightly o'er
The trembling, flutt'ring strings,
And, with a syren's wily lore,
In syren's voice she sings!
Love tunes the chords,
Love prompts the words;

And melody and poesy unite
To make her plaintive lay more fond, more bright !
 'T was in her deep rich tone
 The soul of music spoke—
 But in her eye alone
 The mortal part awoke !
And while in rapture stood the gazing throng,
'T was thus burst forth her prison'd thoughts in song.

Ah, whither dost thou stray, Love !
While smiles around thee play, Love !
Wake, wake, I strike my lute for thee—
It echoes back no joy to me,
And all its tones are less beguiling,
When thou, beloved, no more art smiling !

Ah ! wherefore dost repine, Love ?
My heart, it still is thine, Love !
And in thy path should sorrow stray,
I 'll chase the phantom form away !
Then let not Aza plead in vain,
But give thy wonted smiles again !
There's many a cheek more fair, Love !
But fonder heart—ah ! where, Love ?
And like the stars that in the sky
Around the moon shine joyously,
Thy Love—thy Aza—still will be
The star that guides each joy to Thee.

Then breathe no more such sighs, Love !
But turn on me those eyes, Love !
Thou 'lt find a home of gladness here,
And smiles and lips that once could cheer :

For beaming love shall chase away
The form of dull reality !

Ah ! yes, a smile is dawning, Love !
I hail it as the morning, Love !
That to my soul new light shall bring,
Another hope—another spring—
Now, now, my lute is most beguiling,
For, oh ! I feel, that thou art smiling !

XXXIII.

Hush'd was the lute's seraphic swell,
And her soft pleading voice was still :
She turns with love's wild eagerness
To meet or thanks, or fond caress ;
But ah ! in vain her minstrelsy !
Stern chief ! it could not soften thee !
He little heeds the luminous smile,
Heaven-born—that lights her face the while :
The withering look that from his eye did part,
Sent a congealing pang whose icy dart
Pierced, froze her very inmost heart !
The smile of hope died on her cheek,
Crimson'd her brow, and arms, and neck ;
Her throbbing bosom rose and fell,
Revealing half its snowy swell.
The burning blood coursed quick through ev'ry vein,
While tears unbid—flow'd fast and thick as rain !
But soon she dries her streaming eye,
Stifling her bosom's agony,
And strives to bear his look unkind,
Although the cause is ill defined :

Brushing the tear-drops from her lashes long,
 She gently motions back the gath'ring throng
 Of harem sisters, that around her press
 With smiles—and soothing words—and fond ca-
 ress—

'T is ever thus the tend'rest flow'r
 Will heaviest feel the bleak storm's pow'r,
 And the heart most form'd for bliss and gay delight
 Will ever soonest know the with'ring blight
 Of changed affection's eye !

XXXIV.

With this, the chief disturb'd and restless grew ;
 Varied his cheek from red to pallid hue—
 His eyes wander'd impatiently around,
 His quick ears catching ev'ry distant sound ;
 Not finding then the object sought
 Again he sank absorb'd in thought ;
 But from the trance full soon awoke,
 The opening door his rev'ry broke ;—
 He springs from the couch, like lion from the lair—
 “ Ha ! is he come ? Is it not Kerim there ?—
 'T is well !—'t is well !—My friends, let all with-
 draw—

His vassals bow'd the knee,
 And all, save one, withdrew ;
 With beating heart and eye amazed
 Young Aza on the chieftain gazed,
 Murm'ring, as she took
 A last long ling'ring look—
 “ Oh ! constancy ! thou gift of heav'n,
 “ Art thou to mortals ever given ! ”

XXXV.

When closed the last door on them all,
 And desert was that pompous hall,
 With hasty voice Munuza cries,
 "Speed with thy tale—thou hast too long delay'd—
 Let me not ask thee twice—what says the maid?"
 "My honoured chief!" the artful minister replies,
 "'T is vain—she does thy offers and thyself despise!
 The fearless soul—the resolution firm—
 That I can only vaunting, daring term,
 United to th' unbending pride,
 That have been the bold Pelayo's guide,
 A kindred feeling find
 In his sister's lofty mind.—
 'Go, tell thy chief,' she said, 'the Gothic maid
 Is not of threats or idle words afraid;
 And though his conqu'ring arms in fight
 Have given him a victor's right
 To trample on the stubborn necks of those
 Who e'er will be his dire unyielding foes—
 With their last breath will curse his name—
 Nor bow through ev'ry torture's pain—
 He hath not power left to force the scorning hand of one
 Who feels that, though her country's lost—her honour's
 still her own—
 And though in chains this earthly form he bind,
 What shackles hath he to enslave the mind?
 Th' immortal part will still soar free,
 And glory in its liberty!'
 This said she, with the queenly tone and air,
 That well, in sooth, became a face so fair—
 Further I durst not urge thy suit;
 In faith, good cause had I to doubt

Persuasion then her heart could move ;
'T is said another seeks her love,
And, rumour tells, not vainly does the wooer sue,
For stubborn Fate—still blind—hath made him winner
too.”

XXXVI.

Munuza ill his rising wrath suppress ;
Now bursts the swelling torrent from his breast,
His kindling eyes roll fierce,
He speaks in thund'ring voice :—
“ What sayst thou ?—by my life !—
Refuse to be my wife ?—
By our Great Prophet! then, she dies,
Unless she send more kind replies !
Great Allah ! what degradation for the Moors !
So proudly high this queenly pris'ner towers,
She scorns to be the consort of their chief !
By harsher means shall she be taught—in brief,
Rejected love may quickly turn to hate—
Powerful, deadly, and insatiate ;
Yet would my heart to softer means incline ;
My last hope 's in that working brain of thine :
Quick, then !—I give thee but short time—
Devise some means by which she 's mine,
And thou shalt ne'er repine
That thou hast served the Moorish chieftain long
and well,
For e'en thy highest hopes requital shall excel.
Nature hath giv'n thee quick and subtle brain—
But ponder well—let not thy thought be vain,
Or thy reward 's the dungeon and the chain !”

XXXVII.

Then, musingly, and half apart,
The chief aloud pour'd forth his heart ;
“ Like shooting stars—we but an instant see—
Like the first blossoms shaken from the tree—
Hath been my love for Aza---for them all !
And of each in turn my weary senses pall ;
But fruit succeeds when lighter blossoms fall ;
And, haughty Ormesinda ! mine art thou,
Although, to gain the fruit, I lop the bough !
Like the butterfly that sports in gaudy bower,
And nectar sips from ev'ry blooming flower,
I've bask'd in beauty's smile, and sipp'd the dew
From many a honey'd lip of roseate hue ;
Yet rosy lips not long may joy,
And even honey'd sweets can cloy,
Love is at best a fickle boy ;
And were the higher object gained,
(I care not by what means obtain'd)
My harem would be justly spurn'd.”

XXXVIII.

“ My lord, to me the means are clear,
The hour of fulfilment near ;
The bird that flies, but will not sing,
Should be closely clipt i' the wing ;
And if this lady of the land
So proudly still refuse her hand,
We can but chain her liberty---
Methinks the surest means 't will be.
To-night, when friend and foe are hush'd to rest,
If it should prove my royal chieftain's 'hest,

I 'll seize the fair—Methinks that once confined,
The prison's gloom will quickly change her mind,
For maids are wont to love the air,
That they may sport their toilet's care.
'T is somewhat dreary, too, to be confined,
When love and liberty are on the wind—
But ha! a thought has struck me now,
That in good faith her will shall bow:—
She 's proud—but has a heart—
Then must we wound that part;
'T is the key-stone to a woman's will,
And you may wound—then cure the ill—
We'll seize her lover too—if she incline
Perversely, and consent not to be thine,
Why—lop the traitor's head—
The dog were better dead!”

XXXIX.

He ceased—the artful pause,
Made to assist his cause,
Could scarcely give Munuza time
To con his full extent of crime;
“Well, be it so,” replied the chief,
“And mark—I charge thee to be brief;
When tolls the midnight hour,
Then seek the lofty tower,
For then shall end the princess' power!
Her doom is fix'd---her fate is seal'd—
Not e'en Pelayo's arm can shield
The fearless maid this night,
Who dares to brave our might!

Choose forth the trustiest of my band—
Let not the falcon 'scape thy hand:
The hare that sleeps with open eyes,
Is ever deem'd the greater prize ;
 The maid that 's coy at first,
 Is ever loved the most :
 See, then, that this fair churl
 Escape me not! I 'd hurl
The royal symbol of my race—
Yon golden eagle—from its base,
To have this scornful Christian maid
Before me—trembling and afraid ;
Admiring still the one—(his hand
Though conqu'ror of her native land,)
 Who sues, a lover, at her feet,
 In gen'rous offers to unite
 Her fallen glory to his state,
 And wipe away his conquest's stains,
 And change her bonds to Hymen's chains.
Enough!—a laggard thus, why dost thou stay?
'T is time to choose thy followers---away!
 My heart is scorch'd with a fiery brand—
 My brain is drier than the sand—
 'Go, then, and bring the lily hand
 Whose magic power can quell the flame,
 And calm my bosom back again !”

XL.

“Thy will, great chief! shall be obey'd,”
Kerim obsequiously replied ;
(For he was one who, for a meed,
Would do the darkest, foulest deed.)

“ Slave of thy pleasure and thy will,
I go, thy mandate to fulfil ;
Ere two short hours their course have sped,
The princess shall be captive led.
Though Vulcan with a net of gold allured
His Venus—thine may easier be secured.”

XLI.

Oh ! thou, whom nature made as frail as fair,
What power shall shield thee, Woman ! from the
snare
Ambition, in his soaring flight, around thee flings ?
Who warn thee 'neath how bright a veil he hides
his stings ?
Thou luring fiend ! demon God!--when once the heart
of man
Becomes thy throne---let him recount thy potency who
can,
Not mine the art to trace its boundless space--- a
thought
Can tell at how high a price thy damning smile is
bought ;
How great a mind it may debase, and teach
To grovel—the haven of its hopes to reach.
Give but that thought to him, whose name,
Though wreathed with the warrior's deathless
fame ;
Himself---loved as the father of a bleeding nation's
wrongs---
Unsated with his glory---seeking on a race of kings
To place his c own---dared to disown
Nature's best tie—and at ambition's altar gave
One, who would rather be his lowliest, poorest slave,

Than the world's proud queen! and thought her *highest*
title that of *wife*!

Nor prized her jewell'd coronet, whose brightest gem
Was less to her—than one light fleeting smile from
him—

And yet—he sacrificed that solace through the storms
of life,

And tore her from his breast---the only throne
That woman asks, or loves to call her own!

Napoleon---the Star of France---'t was he who fell!
Lured by ambition's syren voice---that demon spell!
He broke the hallow'd bonds that knit him to the one
Who long had been the bright---the never-clouded---
Sun

Whose smiling rays had lighten'd o'er each softer scene,
(Which even in the warrior's life may intervene:)

For such was the forsaken Josephine!

And such must ever be the warin devotion woman gives
To him---whom, spite of all that dare to hate---she
loves---

And loving---e'en abandonment, neglect forgives---
And yet, fair Josephine! thou wert indeed avenged:
Soaring too high, Napoleon fell--his fortune changed--
Like Æsop's fabled dog, while in the streamlet blue,
Who saw the prize he held reflected to his view,
And grasping at a shadow---lost the substance too!---

END OF CANTO FIRST.

P E L A Y O :

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.

—

CANTO SECOND.



PELAYO :

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.

CANTO SECOND.

I.

ALL Nature slumbers ! Silence deep, profound,
In awful grandeur reigas supreme around ;
Save that the wind, as o'er the leaves it sweeps,
A soft and moaning music makes,
To tell there still is one that wakes,
To sing her lullaby !
The moon, the ever beautiful and bright,
Shedding around a flood of silv'ry light—
Changing to mellow day the sober night—
Sits on the distant hill !

II.

Oh, Spain ! of earth the fairest child !
Proud mistress of the world !
Soul of the beautiful and wild !
Empress of the flag unfurl'd !
What warriors have on thy bosom bled !
What heroes, victors, been in triumph led !

How often has thy soil been crimson'd o'er,
While thy brave sons triumphant, conqu'rors, bore
Freedom's wide banner o'er the bloody plain,
"Where spears had shook, and falchions flash'd
amain,"

'Tween foes who ne'er shall wave a spear again !

The dream is past—and now—

Alas ! how changed art thou !

Ah, whither has thy greatness fled ?

'T is shrouded—buried—with the dead !

Plutus hath wash'd thy banks of red—

Full many a fallen warrior's bed—

And strew'd them with the golden store,

They little knew in days of yore.

"Auri sacra fames"—

Accursed thirst of gold—

In luxury and ease

Hath chain'd thy warriors bold !

Accursed—unquench'd---inglorious thirst---

For which ye leave the laurel wreath to fade

And wither in some lone, unhallow'd shade—

Ay, ay—to gather gilded dust !

What were ye once—and oh, what are ye now ?

Once! at the shrine of Mars ye learn'd to bow

The knee---Now! baneful Plutus hears your vow.

Is all your glory fled ? Breathes not one soul

Who nobly dares to spurn the golden thrall ?

Or when your far-famed sires died,

Died with them too their country's pride ?

Nought but their name, for monument, is left behind,

To bring, in latest age, their valiant deeds to mind—

To tell what was—what never more shall be—

The shout of victory and liberty !

III.

But hold ! not yet was freedom's fire dead,
 For glory's long lost spirit roved, not fled ;
 In after days, one spark burst from the smouldering
 flame—

One noble soul, that broke the adamantine chain !
 How could I e'er forget, what ne'er shall be forgot,
 Till Hope and Glory are no more, and Time is not ?
 The iron yoke of tyranny, O Spain, hung on thy brow,
 And Plutus' golden rod, all-powerful, laid thy children
 low ;

But Fate watch'd o'er her fairest land,
 Though Superstition's scorching brand
 Had spread its fires far and wide—
 Shading in gloom and blood the tide
 Of liberty—yet still Fate watch'd, and mourn'd, and
 wept,

That thus the flow'rets of her lovely Eden slept ;
 And then, like Abel's off'ring, to the Deity
 Her prayer on mercy's lenient wing arose, and He

The "embryo spirit" gave,

With power yet to save

Thy glory from the yawning grave.

Then rose Riego !* valiant, bold and high,

" Strength in his arm, and lightning in his eye,"

* Riego, whose name will ever be ranked among the dearest to every Spanish heart, in 1820 was placed at the head of the revolutionary party that compelled Ferdinand to sign a bill of rights and constitution for the country. The Spaniards enjoyed these privileges for three years ;—when England, Russia and France marched an army of a hundred thousand men into Spain, and compelled the Spaniards to conform their government to the views of the " Allied Powers." Upon this occasion, Riego retreated with a band of patriots to the mountains, but was shortly after betrayed, taken, and hung. He was a native of Asturias, the birth-place of Pelayo.

The hated links in twain were rent !
 A thousand hearts, with vengeance pent,
 Awoke, and their best life-blood spent,
 Struggling for liberty !
 Alas, for thee, O Spain ! he came too late—
 Nought could redeem thy lost and fallen state ;
 And e'en the parent earth, ungrateful, drank his gore,
 Who would have broke they chains ! And shalt thou
 never more
 Behold the triumph that awaits the free,
 But wear thy chains, and bow the servile knee,
 To the foul enslavers of thy liberty ?
 Weep ! weep ! and be thy tears of blood—thy knell
 In superstition's croaking voice hath rung—
 Thy guardian angel bid a last farewell !
 Long shall the poet's lyre be unstrung,
 Ere it may wake again, to deem
 Thy later deeds a worthy theme !

IV.

The moon shines through a misty veil,
 And fast is sinking 'neath the hill !
 And, hark ! the midnight tolling bell
 Breaks on the stilly air :—
 Is, then, the hour so near,
 When the strong shall triumph o'er the weak ? the
 despot's will
 Shall snare the captive maid who hates, disdains him
 still ?
 And can that moon's bright ray,
 Of spotless purity—
 Yet ling'ring stay—to shine upon the deed ?
 No ! rather shall she seek to hide her head,

And blush, blood-red, for very shame,
That such a sight
Her silver light
Unveil'd—and glorious—should stain !
And now—the last pale beam is gone,
And Darkness, from his ebon throne,
Flings his black mantle round—and Silence, with her
stealthy tread,
Stalks mutely to her midnight watch, as though to
guard the dead !
'Tis well ! the shroud of night hides many a damning
deed,
And Silence, if she dared to speak, might bid "*God
speed.*"

V.

Within yon ancient tower's lofty wall,
Two noble ladies you might see ;
The first was proud in mien, in stature tall,
With air of high nobility !
'T was Ormesinda, that, in pensive mood,
Beside her friend and foster-mother stood :
A something in her look there was, more nobly high
Than e'en the poet's art can e'er portray ;
Something, that spoke in the proud flashings of her eye ;
But, when she smiled—that bore a softer ray ;
It was not sternness—yet 't would awe—
A thing we love—and, yet must fear—
And they, the proudest e'en who saw,
Were taught by impulse to revere.
Deep thought was 'throned upon her brow serene,
(That lofty brow befitted well her mien)

Pale sorrow's hand had pluck'd the roses from her
cheek,

Her dark and pensive eye a brooding sadness spoke,
Whose light with meek and chasten'd lustre stray'd,
Casting a lovelier and more mellow shade

O'er that fair face—whose beauty seem'd to grow, e'en
more intense

With ev'ry glance—charming, as by a spell, each
thought and sense.

Yet 't was not in her shining, hazel eye

That beauty shone, in fair supremacy—

Nor was it in her form alone,

(Though her's, indeed, was lovely one)

'T was in the bright and towering soul,

Whose radiance o'er her features stole,

The mind, it was, that held such sway,

And bow'd the throng, who must obey!

The glossy mazes of her light brown hair

Were simply parted, on a brow more fair

Than the myrtle's clustering blossoms are ;

And, though so haughty in her mien, yet still

Modest simplicity became her well :—

Nor was she queen in form alone,

But queenly in her thought, and tone ;

Such queen, as e'en when off her throne,

The impress bears of what she is.....

The Eagle may stoop his airy flight,

But is he not still a bird of night ?

The Lion may in chains be led,

But still he proudly rears his head ;

And, captive to his keeper's will,

Yet looks the forest's monarch still !

VI.

"Thou 'rt pensive, love," Elgira cries,

Say, what new source of sorrow lies

All hidden from my pitying eyes.

Ah, gentle princess! wilt thou not—to me,

Whose hand hath rear'd thy tender infancy—

With all a mother's love, a mother's fears,

Have watch'd unceasingly thy childhood's years;—

Wilt not in this fond bosom pour thy grief?

Would that th' exchange might give to thine
relief."

Curl'd on the maiden's lip the while,

An unrepress'd, though mournful smile!

"Thou ever kind!—I pray thee, do not chide,

My grief is with a fantasy allied—

In sooth 't is but a dream—prophetic one I still must
deem—

Nay, do not smile, though worthy cause for smiling
there may seem.

Last night, methought, I roved by Covadonga's side,

Beneath my feet I saw the crystal waters glide,

While gazing, still I stood,

Their flow was changed to blood!

I turn'd—but other horrors met my sight

That froze my heart, and chill'd my veins with fright,

For, in our verdant wood

Ten Moorish huntsmen stood—

And, then, I saw a timid doe,

Whiter than Alpine fleecy snow,

With speed fly tremblingly!—

In vain it sought the covert's shade,

While darting swiftly through the glade,

A silver shaft, wing'd from the huntsman's bow,
Had made the purple stream of life to flow.

Speechless, I turn'd to trace

The cruel murderer's face!

And smiling, sneering at my grief,
Munuza stood—the Moorish chief—
His skilful hand had thrown the dart
That pierced the hapless victim's heart;

I paused, its fate to know—

When, behold! the trembling doe
Seem'd pressing deeper in its heart
The cruel chief's envenom'd dart.

Still, as I mutely gazed,

The dying head was raised—

A change had pass'd—for, lo!

No more I view'd the doe—

But, in its stiff'ning, dying face,

My death-struck features I could trace!

And next—appeared a buckler, cleft in twain;

Near it, the bloody-minded chief lay slain!

And then, I saw Pelayo's brawny arm on high,
And heard his stern voice shouting, "death or vic-
tory!"

The field had grown with slaughter red—

A crown was on my brother's head—

And all around the Moors lay dead!

Forward I sprang, to clasp him to my breast,

But, with the motion, fled my vision'd rest;

The cold, damp dew hung on my brow,

And my curdling blood refused to flow.

Methought that vaguely some prophetic seer
Had warn'd me of a darker future, near,

And, in my breast is brooding, still,
A presage of some coming ill,
Which, though it scarcely be defined,
Is deeply rooted in my mind.”
“Nay! spurn such thoughts,” the matron said,
“And weaken not thy heart with dread.
When swelling winds and clouds foretel the storm,
Then gather courage, to avert its harm;
Not mine, alas! the power to read thy dream,
Yet, e’en to me, it must prophetic seem,
And I would warn thee hence to fly—Pelayo is not
here—
The Moorish chieftain’s vengeful cruelty, well mayst
thou fear!
Mercy he knows not—Seek for it rather in the vul-
ture’s nest,
Than hope to find such kindly feeling in Munuza’s
breast.
Fear may have chains, perchance, to bind his soul,
But mercy—flies such habitation foul!
With speed decide—what wilt thou do?
Where’er thou goest, I ’ll follow too—
One state we ’ll share—together live or die,
Be it to perish here, or hence to fly—
And perish well we may—thy dear, loved brother gone—
Within the chieftain’s grasp, unshielded, and alone—
Oh! whither may not fury urge him on!”

VII.

“Fear not, my friend, I have bethought the means
To save us both, and ’scape these Moorish fiends.

E'en as the morning lark takes wing,
E'er warbling forth its matin song,
In silence we will speed our flight,
While shrouded yet by friendly night.
Cease, then, to mourn, for e'er the dawn
Our loved Cantabria we will see,
And peace, and joy, and liberty !
Hail, Covadonga ! silent cave !
Hail, home of the unvanquish'd brave !
How often, hunted by the Moorish band,
Have Goths, the bravest, noblest, refuge found
 Within thy wild retreat—
 Fair nature's dwelling seat—
Oh ! when shall I see thee again, Cantabria wild ?
When, happy home, wilt thou greet thy long-lost child ?
When shall I see thy tow'ring mountains high,
Whose snowy tops e'en to the very sky
 Are rear'd ! piercing the vault above,
 As though they daring strove
 To woo the angels' love ?
When greet the warbling wild bird's song,
As through the air it skims along ?
Or hear the thunder's roar—when the vivid lightning
 plays
So wildly o'er the huge rocks, flashing with its rays,
 As though it better loved to sport
 Along their rugged steep, than court
 The verdant green beneath them sleeping,
 And flow'rets gay, with rain-drops weeping !
How often have I watch'd the rising sun's first golden
 beam,
Sparkling like thousand diamonds o'er Deva's branch-
 ing stream ;

And seen the mist, with graceful sweep,
 Roll gently up the mountain's steep,
 And hang in wreaths upon its frozen brow,
 Until the sunbeam's light had made it glow,
 As if 't were sapphire gems encircling snow !
 Home of my youth ! Covadonga ! where
 Hath heaven made a place so fair ?
 What richer carpet, than thy ever-verdant moss,
 Can Turkey boast—or woven of more silken floss ?
 What lovelier curtain know,
 Than the ivy vine, that weaves
 A lattice with its leaves,
 Which the blue sky shines through ?
 What fountain, made by art, can e'er
 With the gentle purling brook compare,
 That glides before
 Our cavern door ? ”

VIII.

“And oft, when mellow eve drew nigh,
 While gazing, raptured, on the rising moon,
 Or cloudless, spangled sky,
 How little thought I—dream'd I—then, how
 soon
 Such joys were doom'd to fly !
 I deem'd not bondage would have press'd
 Its iron grasp on Gothic breast ;
 Or that the force of Moors could e'er disarm
 My royal brother's long victorious arm ;
 But, yet, we will not tamely bow
 Our heads beneath the conqueror's blow,
 While there remains one hope of liberty !

To-night, for Covadonga's grot
We leave this now detested spot ;
Our friendly shelter hath it been before,
When sore oppress'd in time of war :
Now it will be our home once more ;
For fain, my friend, I would not dally here—
'T is true, Munuza's threats I do not fear ;
And yet, 't were sporting in the lion's jaw."

IX.

"How freely, joyfully, my life I 'd yield,
Could it but be my bleeding country's shield ;
But not my honour—shackled or free,
I would not wed the enemy
That wrought my nation's chains—even to ransom
thee,
My loved, my injured country—give *thee* liberty !
No—rather bare my bleeding heart
To meet in death the venom'd dart,
Than clasp the crimson hand,
That hath let loose a brand
Upon my native land !
Would not the altar quake,
And my dead sire awake,
E'en from the heavy sleep of death,
To curse me with his ghostly breath,
That I should e'er espouse
Such false, unhallow'd vows !
No—worn by care, and sick at heart,
I still will act a loyal part!
E'en should Alonzo die—and I again be free—
How could I give my hand to friend or enemy ?

The heart that once hath loved,
Ne'er knows a second flame---
Till death remains unmoved,
And loves through life the same---
The full-grown tree, torn by the root,
In other soil will die---
But the tender sapling twig may shoot
Its branches to the sky---
Thus Fancy, young, and wandering, may change,
But love---true love---hath never known to range."

X.

"Has not midnight toll'd? Ah! then the hour is
near,
And soon my loved Alonzo will be here :
I hear a step---why does my heart so wildly move ?
A gentle step---it is---I know it is my love !
Fly, fly, Elgira ! ope the door,
Bid welcome ! to a Goth once more !"
Then o'er her face the maiden threw her veil,
With modest care---as though she would conceal
The crimson blush---which, dawning o'er her lily
cheek,
Might all the fond emotions of her bosom speak---
And the glad soul---that mirror'd in her eye,
Too plainly tell what thoughts were glancing
by.---
To you, fair maids, who oft, with anxious ear,
The long-expected lover's step to hear
Have watch'd, with flushing cheek, and panting
heart---
Need I young Ormesinda's thoughts impart ?

Ye, who have wept at parting---smiled at meeting---
With tears still leaving---with rejoicings greeting---
Him whose longest stay would still seem fleeting---

Who oft, at midnight hour---
From casement of some lonely tower---
Or e'en in Love's secluded bower---
Have listen'd to each fancied sound,
While your glad hearts, with ready bound,
Proclaim'd the distant step of him you love---
All that the maiden's anxious heart did prove,
The thrill---the glow---ye well do know ;
When thus she thought her loved Alonzo near,
And:soon, O joyful moment ! would be there---
But, if ye e'er have felt the blight
Of disappointment's dreary night---
When the glad morn of hope hath fled,
And night succeeds---alas, how dread !---
List, then---my tale must tell, I trow,
Enough of disappointment now.

XI.

While thus intent she stood, to catch the first loved
tone
Of that dear one---whose heart, responsive to her
own
Oft beat---a shriek burst on her ear,
And armed Moors, with weapons bare,
And looks of threat'ning gloom,
Rush'd furious in the room !
While Kerim foremost---smiling with a savage glee,
Exclaim'd---“ Proud beauty ! 't is by force of arms,
you see,

The chieftain claims his own.—If kindness cannot
woo,

'T is this, our law—to try what harsher means may do!"

When, with a glance, the startled princess knew

The Moor; her fear-bent form more stately grew—

More proud her air—and though

Her cheek, and flashing eye did show

Something of anger's kindled glow,

She mann'd her heart—no thought of fear oppress'd

The noble lady, as she thus address'd

The leader of the band,

Who stood with sword in hand:—

"What brings you here, thou bloody Moor?"

What seek you at the midnight hour?

Away! night must not be the time

For counsel, dark and dread as thine!

If in these walls thou 'st aught to say,

It should not shame the light of day!

But if thy words require night's secrecy—

Moor! they have nought to do with thee and me!

No more—speed with thy mission, and away!"

"'T is one, fair lady, brooks not of delay—

Nay, nay, unbend that haughty brow;

What 'vails it to thy greatness now

That lofty power *once* was thine!

Pride bows before the victor's shrine!

Pause well, e'er thou reply'st, or ——"

"Enough! enough! I'll hear no more—

Hence, hypocrite! with thy rich store

Of scornful words!—and if ye prize your lives,

Fly quickly hence—ere one brave Goth arrives,

Who well shall make you pay
This night's temerity ! "---
Th' undaunted Kerim thus return'd :—
" Our chief may not again be spurn'd—
Lady ! we stir not hence—imperial power
Commands thy presence—e'en this very hour.
What boots it that 't is night or day ?
Thou must, in both, the chief obey !
'T is by his mandate we are here,
Strange then, indeed, if we should fear
Thy threats !—well mayst thou be amazed ;
For see how many arms are raised
In his—Munuza's honour'd cause.
We have no time for further pause—
Decide at once—wilt thou obey
The chieftain's will ? or aye—or nay ?—
For, ere the sun shines forth one ray,
We soon shall find the means, in brief,
To lead thee, captive, to our chief !"
The flush of anger died upon her cheek,
Burst from her lips one long despairing shriek !
Her white hands clasp'd—her lips apart, and pale—
And her suppliant eyes to heaven raised the while—
She stood, a form of suppliant woe !
A form, too fair, such grief to know !

XII.

But a signal from the Moor, that spoke
Her dalliance, now, he ill could brook,
Brought recollection back again,
And deeper anguish thrill'd each vein :

'T was then the angry blood rose to her temples high,
And indignation's glow burnt in her lustrous eye;
Blood---that a moment since forgot to flow---
And eyes---that glazing o'er no motion knew!
But, when at length her speech return'd,
More wildly still her bosom burn'd;
"Go, miscreant!" contemptuously she cried,
"And tell thy chief, Pelayo's sister said,
His threats and fury she can never dread,
Long as that brother's arm
Is still her shield from harm."
She proudly turn'd---and spoke no more---
Though stern the look her features wore.
"These words," quoth Kerim, with a leering scowl,
That pierc'd the princess to her very soul---
"Would better come from lips as fair as thine;
For, if perchance, they should escape from mine,
My head would on the scaffold block be laid;
Thus, only, could such daring be repaid;
Howe'er I cannot doubt, from you
Our chief will pay them reverence due;
Though angry words are little wont to move
Him, who can justly punish, well as love;"
And, as he spoke, he pointed round
To the arm'd Moors, who seem'd inclin'd
His every look and word to mind.

XIII.

One hasty glance she cast, in mute despair,
But saw, alas! no hope of refuge there;
Till, frenzied with her grief, as swift as air,
The princess to the casement flew,
Then, quick and high the sash she drew---

You offer'd Christian, harm.—List to my words,
Or you may rue it—Soldiers, sheath your swords !
And blush, that swords which nobly fought in war,
The self-same hands, in such a cause, should draw !”
Quoth Kerim, “ Hold ! or soon these swords shall
blush

With blood, that from thy craven heart may gush !”
More he had said—but, fierce, Alonzo cried, “ Come on,
Thou cowardly tool, base, foul-mouth'd fool ! ere we
have done,

Or you, or I, shall wed

This night, a crimson bed.”

Swift from his scabbard flew his brand !

More swift, he turn'd upon the band,

And dealt on the approaching Moor a blow

That cleft the hardy villain's skull in two !

Weltering in blood, the miscreant fell ;

That blow had toll'd his spirit's knell !

But, 't is not Kerim he has slain—

Alonzo wields his brand again,

And ev'ry Moorish arm is rais'd on high,

And flash the naked steels before his eye !

On, on they rush ! but, blow on blow

Has fail'd to lay the brave youth low.

Short was the bloody strife ! the warrior's strength
began to fail—

But when, mid clash of steel, his ear caught Ormesin-
da's wail,

The fire would kindle in his breast again,

Dart from his eye, and madden his reeling brain !

For, well he knew his blood was flowing fast,

Nor long th' unequal combat now could last ;

Though, in her cause, he willingly would die,
Yet felt he, in that low, and moaning cry,
 'T was not alone his death she fear'd,
 If she, too, could that death have shar'd ;
'T was, that a darker cloud must now descend
Unshielded by her last—her only friend---
Munuza's form in fancy o'er her hung,
And from her breast that mournful cry had wrung.

XV.

When, first, Alonzo's strength gave way,
'T was then that Kerim sought his prey ;
He rush'd upon th' exhausted knight,
As, furious, to renew the fight.
High o'er their heads his sword is rais'd !—he holds
 his breath !
Where'er that weapon falls—the stroke is certain
 death !
And see ! Alonzo stands unarm'd, and reeling
With loss of blood, still slowly, feebly stealing
From many a gaping wound.—“And was he slain ?”
Methinks I hear some gentle girl exclaim—
 Oh, no ! another sword did gleam—
 Another arm was thrust between—
 And closing with the Moorish foe,
 Caught on an unstain'd shield the blow—
Few moments fierce and well, the stranger champion
 fought,
As if, with death alone, could victory be bought !
But soon, alas ! he failed—for, in good sooth,
The brave one, only was a stripling youth ;

Cover'd with wounds—and fighting still—he fell !
 'T was then—that loudly rose the Moorish yell,
 'T was then—they seized upon their fallen prey,
 With savage glee, to bear them quick away !
 While Ormesinda, by her lover's side,
 Kneeling, with dizzy brain, like maniac tried
 To break the shackling bands,
 And loose her fetter'd hands !—
 So fondly had she bent her lover o'er,
 That many a drop yet warm, of purple gore,
 Roll'd down her loosen'd hair, tinging her brow
 With crimson hue !—and strangely did that flow
 Blemish, and mar its pearl-like purity !
 Yet, still she knelt ; still watched those eyes, that now
 more glassy grew,
 And anxious, listen'd to each short, impeded breath he
 drew---
 But while in anguish thus she gazed,
 The cruel Moors her light form raised,
 And tore the struggling maid away !

XVI.

Now, noiselessly they journeyed on, until the iron gate
 Was reach'd---and oh ! how harshly did that massy
 portal grate
 On Ormesinda's sicken'd heart, and ear !
 It seem'd the opening of some dungeon door,
 From whence, alive, she 'd ne'er “find exit
 more !”
 Yet 't was not that she fear'd to die---
 A martyr's doom, with dauntless eye

She would have met---for, not in terror's garb was
death array'd,

Too often had this noble maid,

With soul-inspired fervour prayed,

For her dear country's right that she might die !

But other thoughts now crowded on her mind,

With horror, and the worst of shame combined ;

And, mingling with the rest, her lover's chains oppress'd

Her heart—she saw his eye glowing with life again,

And saw it, scarce with joy—'t was but return of pain ;

For, agonised—vanquish'd—and a prisoner, now—

Although Munuza's fellest tortures could not bow

His soul—yet ev'ry torture would be plied—

And ev'ry piercing pang be multiplied—

Till—victim of his martyrdom—he died !—

Such are the racking thoughts, that dart,

Their venom o'er her woman's heart !—

For, spite of all—she was a woman still,

And, woman-like—had she her choice of ill,

Had suffer'd in his stead,

And borne the pangs, she 'd dread

To fall upon his head !---

XVII.

Unbroken was her reverie, till a glare of light,

Bursting from that illumined hall, obscured her sight ;

But, when the noble maiden saw

She stood Munuza's couch before,

With haughty pride, her veil was drawn across her
brow,

She stood in majesty ! and, sternly bade to know

Why she, at his command, was here,
By force—and at such unseemly hour !
The chief—sprang from his couch with graceful
 bound,
And, to the earth, made obeisance profound ;
“ Fair lady ! though my wish has brought you here,
Yet ’t was not meet those lovely hands should wear
 These rudely bound, and uncouth cords !
 For, silken ties and loving words,
 Are all the chains that e’er should bind
 So fair a form, and fairer mind !
Nay, then, why that disdainful frown—that angry eye ?
Thus, in releasing thee—thy lowliest slave am I !—
 With chains, alone, thy lovely eyes have wove,
 I ’m sorely bound, ’t is true,
And, since each shackle has been forged by love—
 Oh ! let them bind thee too !—
To gain thy heart hath ever been the dearest ’hest
Of my proud soul :—and, now my love hath been confess’d,
Now, now ”—she waved her hand to bid him peace—
“ Enough ! enough ! with such vain sayings cease !—
 ’T is not the hour to plead thy love,
 Nor, can it e’er successful prove ;—
 Stern hate, disgust, and scorn,
 To thee I ’ve ever borne !—
To thee—till life may end—shall ever, ever bear ;
Nor, all thy tortures, and thy threats, can make me
 fear !
Say, what art thou t’ inspire my love,
Who cannot even feebly prove

Himself a man?—(though only 't were in art)—
Not his the name who acts such dastard part :
God ne'er made man with iron heart !—
And some dark fiend, then, I see in thee,
Inured from childhood's hour to cruelty !—
One spark of mercy—though it were but one—
God gave to ev'ry heart—but thine has none !
An infidel ! my nation's foe ! think'st thou that e'er
Thy proffers, and thy words of love, I'll stoop to hear ?
Thou know'st not e'en thy promises I can revere :—
But how days since—thou 'st, swearing, said,
Thou wouldst not hurt a single hair
That grew upon my honour'd head,
Nor cause these eyes to shed one tear—
And broke the vow, soon as 't was made.
Chief ! thou hast heard my words—still firm, un-
changed, e'en as to-night,
They shall remain.—I'd rather heaven's deadliest
curse should blight
My soul—than bow my pride,
To be thy 'fianced bride !"
She spoke—then turn'd her eyes away ;
Those eyes, beneath whose piercing ray,
Now lighted as they were,
By the flashings of despair,
The dauntless chieftain did not cower—
Though, if he fear'd the lightning's power,
When blighting on the unjust head it falls—
Well might he sink beneath those radiant balls !—

XVIII.

" Lady ! offend no more mine ear ;
Thy words bespeak the lurking fear,

That, vainly now, you strive to hide ;
 One week I give thee, to decide
 If thou wilt be Munuza's bride.
 If not---then shalt thou linger here,
 Slave of my pleasure—who shall fear
 My very look—as though 't would sear--- ”
 “ Stop, Moor ! ” a youth, till then unheeded, cried,
 “ The Christian princess ne'er shall be thy bride,
 Not yet thy prisoner, spite of all thy pride,
 Fer, 'mong the Goths, there still remains one arm,
 Which all thy empty threats can not disarm ;
 Yes, chief ! though in thy dungeon's dark confine,
 Thou mayst immure this worthless frame of mine,
 Yet here I swear, she never shall be thine !
 His weaken'd voice sank faint, and low ;
 Again, the blood, yet oozing slow,
 Began, in fiercer tide to flow !---

XIX.

Sternly, Munuza gazed upon the youth ;
 “ What means this daring mockery ? In sooth
 A very boy, to breed me such annoy ! whence comes
 this Goth ?
 Give answer quick---or quicker to the ready block
 with both ! ”
 And Kerim, then, the scene described,
 'Plaining how three brave Moors had died
 Beneath Alonzo's, and yon stripling's blow ;
 While, in hot rage and shame, the burning glow
 Dyed, with a deeper hue, his swarthy brow,
 As he told, how they had dared to lift the sword
 Gainst e'en the minister of his honour'd lord ;

And, how he parried well Alonzo's stroke,
And with the paltry youth a lance he broke.
The haughty chieftain, too, inflamed by anger grew,
And turning on the stripling boy,
" Could he, say'st thou, a Moor destroy ?
I should not think so light he prized his head,
O'er which, scarce twenty summers can have sped."
Fired by the taunt, proudly the youth replied ;
" I would not vaunt of skill not often tried,
Yet, chief, when met in deadly fray,
Both thee, and thine, I 'd quickly slay,
To ~~any~~ such noble friend as he,
Yon wounded Goth, hath been to me.
When, side by side, upon the battle plain we fought,
A savage Moor his huge axe flung,
Whose fall had soon my death groan rung,
When on his shivering sword, the blow Alonzo
caught,
And saved my life, though, then, that life to him was
nought;
The combat done---through seas of blood he waded
o'er the plain,
To where I lay, senseless, deserted, among heaps of
slain.
Chief! we are Christians---and, when life return'd,
One warm desire within my bosom burn'd ;
It was some future day
This mighty debt to pay.
Since that dread hour, firm friends we 've ever been---
Yet, count I not this little act, I ween,
As half the payment due
For his affection true ;

The faith we worship, teaches us to be
 Still generous, even to our enemy—
 And such, Munuza, is the Christian's creed,
 But thine ! is shortly told in this dark deed !—
 Be nobler, then, and spurn thy cowardly crime,
 Yet, for amends, there 's full and ample time—
 Release this maid---and she will bless the hand
 That saved hershame, though it enslaved her land—
 Against thine own infirmities be bold,
 Love never yet was bought by force or gold ;
 Give liberty to yon fair maid—
 The sacrifice is well repaid,
 When, prayers from her, like incense shall arise,
 Wafting thy name, with blessings, to the skies ;
 Oh ! if thou 'st truly loved !—say, chief,
 Couldst view, unmoved, her poignant grief ?
 'T is not love's bearing, this ! Love tortures not, itself
 to please—
 But, rather suffers double pangs, the loved one to re-
 lease."

XX.

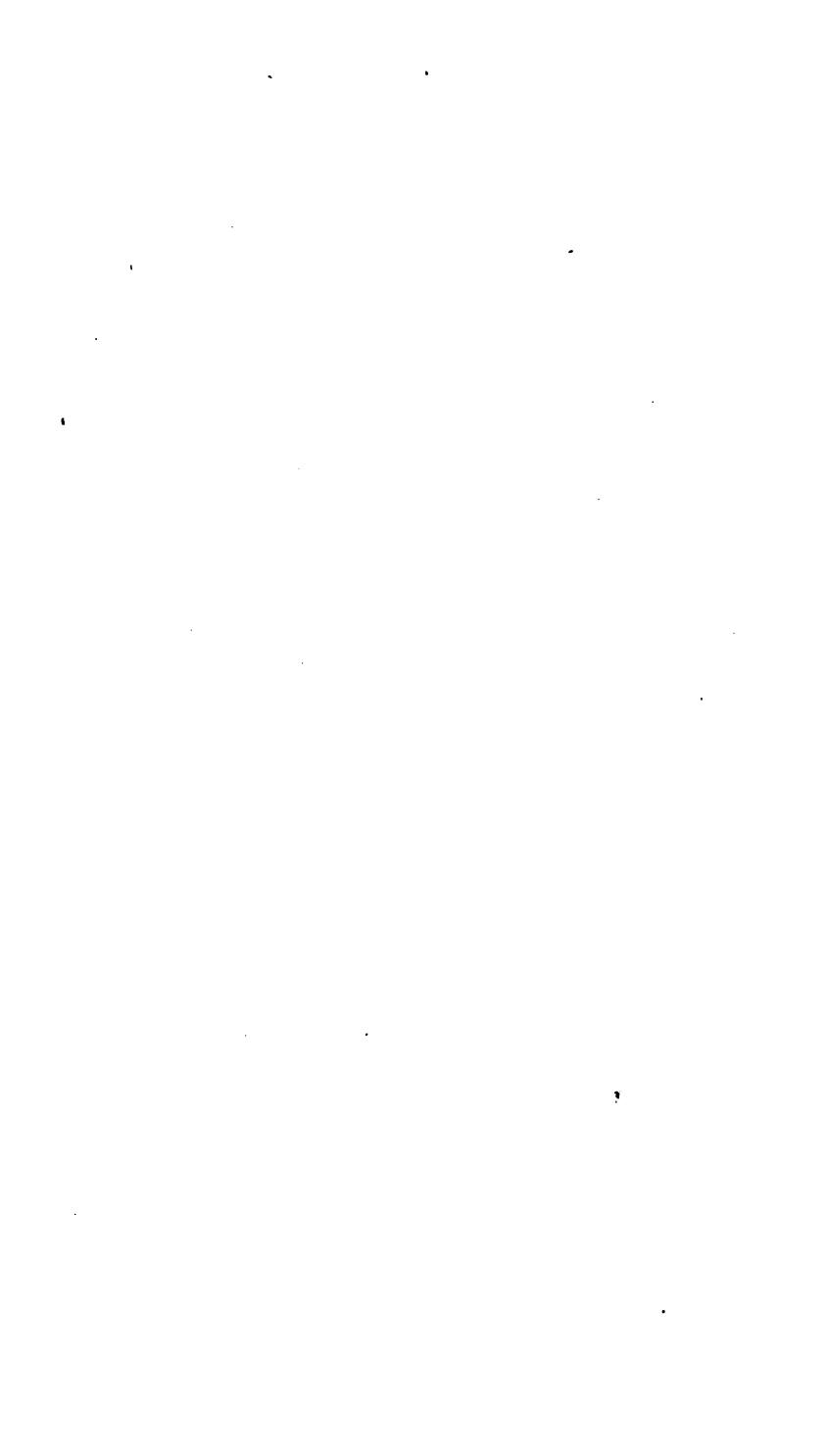
" Bold youth ! thus long I 've let thee speak,
 That all thy fury thou mightst wreak,
 Its force, I knew, lay in thy well-phrased tongue alone,
 But now, I'll hear no more, thou art too saucy grown.
 Ho, there ! See that these Goths in dungeon dark are
 thrown,
 And summon to my presence, here, the Moorish maids,
 who wait
 Upon the princess—lady ! they revere thy royal state."
 With speed his orders are obey'd ;
 The youths, to dungeon's gloom convey'd,

And Ormesinda to her gilded prison led,
To her more loathsome than the darkest dungeon's
bed !

XXI.

O, Man! God's greatest, noblest work !
Creation's Lord ! highest and best !—
Why is 't Eve's serpent still will lurk
Within her hapless offspring's breast ?—
Thou ! who wert made to wear upon thy brow,
Of honour, and innocence, the glorious glow !
How art thou fallen—sullied now—
What feeling is thy bosom's guest
What passion idly stirs thy breast,
That makes thee cull the lily flower
Thou lovest to view—but canst not wear—
And see it perish in an hour,
Rather than bloom in soil more fair ?
Say, canst thou look upon the flow'ret crush'd and
dead,
Whose bloom is lost---whose balmy fragrance all is
fled---
And think thy traitor hand, its perfumed sweets hath
shed,
And broke the tender stem in two,
Where once so fair and bright it grew ?
'T is proud Ambition's, and thy giant strife,
False Love ! that gives such deadly passions life.
Eve---daring---sought to be as great as God ;
And ye---her offspring---feel his chastening rod !

END OF CANTO SECOND.



P E L A Y O :

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.



CANTO THIRD.



PELAYO :

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

Hark ! hark ! whence comes that silv'ry tone,
That murmurs, now, in gentle moan,
Now, swelling louder, on the wind is borne,
Rejoicing at the first red streak of morn?—
And list !—the distant, seraph voice
Seems, now to wail, now to rejoice,
Stealing the raptured sense away,
With sounds of heavenly melody !—
'T is hush'd !—but, on the sighing gale
Fond Echo whispers still the tale,
And, loving yet the sound, e'en though 't is gone,
Repeats it oft, in many a varying tone,
As though her wooing voice could wake again
The mellow softness of that rapturous strain.
It was the Statue's greeting voice that spoke.
Aurora's kiss the stony form awoke !
And sculptured Memnon's note*
On the morning air did float,

* The marble statue of Memnon, placed in the temple of Serapis, at Thebes, was fabulously believed by the ancients to utter sweet and harmonious sounds soon as the first beams of the rising sun appeared, as though rejoicing at its mother, Aurora's coming.

To welcome his sweet mother's beaming smile—
That round high heaven's portal gleam'd the while,
Just as the rosy gate she open'd wide,
That dazzling Sol, her Father-God, might ride
His fiery chariot through the sky—
Leaving its golden track on high.
Till ev'ry cloud reflects the dye !

II.

It is a glorious sight, to see
The morning sun ride joyously,
Within his gemm'd and golden car,
Chasing away each silver star,
That twinkles, trembles, from afar,
And glitters in the vault of blue,
And gives it half its radiant hue.—
'T is dawn ! the airy tapestry of morning light
Dispels, with its gray mist, the darker shades of
night ;
And the pale moon smiles adieu.—
The white clouds part their fleecy breast,
To welcome now their heavenly guest !
While he flings o'er their floating snow,
A veil of gold—and diamond's glow ;
The flowers sport their dewy diadem,
The sun hath given jewels bright to them—
There 's scarce a plant, or tree, or thing of earth, or
air,
That welcomes not, O, Morn ! thy radiant face and
fair !

III.

Rich was her princely chamber, and adorn'd
With all the luxuries that mark a queen !—
But 'mid the proud array of art, yet mourn'd
Nature's fair child—for all, that once had been !
The hours—the days—the scenes—longflown !
Forever past—forever gone !
And she—this empty grandeur gladly would exchange,
Once more, in Covadonga's lovely wilds to range.
The day—the fatal day—had come,
That seal'd young Ormesinda's doom !
And there she sat, in mute despair,
Knowing the dreadful hour near—
Disdaining yet, to shed a tear :—
Through all that livelong night, as motionless she 'd
been—
Even as now!—and when the morn began to gleam,
And the first, faint streak of day,
Lighted the proud display
Of wealth, that round her lay,
There, still unmov'd, she sat ! as one whose soul
had fled—
Whose body lived—although the broken heart was
dead :
The gloom of dark, and fix'd despair,
Sat on that brow, so high, and fair ;—
Rigid, and cold, her figure frail,
Her lips, compress'd, and thin, and pale ;
Here was indeed, "the wreck of Beauty's shrine,"
(For Beauty's self, lost maiden, once was thine ;)

All gone, the dazzling splendour of the eye
 That turns, with spell-bound stare, upon the sky,
 All fled, the lovely look of high disdain !
 And in its place, the agony of pain—
 The torturing wildness of a wilder'd brain !
 Her chill, cold hands, were closely prest
 Upon as chill, as cold, a breast !
 Yet, in that form—still, beauty linger'd there,
 In spite of all the ravage of despair !
 'T was something in her noble air,
 Surviving sorrow, time and care !
 Though you may bend the tall oak tree,
 And lop its spreading branches free,
 Still will it bear its lonely majesty !
 Thus, too, the rose, whose stem is broke, whose
 verdure reft
 Its perfumed sweets retains—for fragrance still is
 left.

IV.

Oh ! who, 'mong earthly sufferers ! can tell
 The deep, deep anguish of the heart, so well
 As she, who knows that mute despair,
 When bursts no sigh—when flows no tear—
 And the very brain—is dry, and sear !
 When, not a sound escapes the pallid lips,
 And the fix'd, and swollen eye, no longer weeps !
 When the very blood, within the veins,
 Curdling, and cold, as ice remains !
 And ev'ry pulse, grown chill—
 So slowly beats—so still—
 You scarce might feel its thrill !—

From such a heart—the sunny smile of hope is left,
Within the care-worn statue-form, alone is left
That breath, which chains to earth a soul,
Longing to soar, beyond control,
And freed from shackles here—to heaven rise—
And find a calmer home, within the skies !

V.

And thus, felt she, fair offspring of adversity !
Though born in splendour—nurs'd in tears—
For sorrow dimm'd her dawning years !
And, now, had come the fatal hour,
When most she knew stern sorrow's power :
For, on that day, her doom was fix'd for life !
Or, as the hated chief's reluctant wife,
Or, here, as haplessly to dwell
The slave, and creature of his will !
If once the timid dove is guest
Within the savage vulture's nest,
What mortal hand shall dare to save the prey,
Or, from his talons tear the prize away ?

VI.

But, still firm, as the mount upon its base,
Not, e'en despair could make her heart give place
To thoughts unworthy of her race !
And, think not that she waver'd—no ! she spurn'd to
be his wife,
And rather there would dwell—his slave—the slave of
all—through life,

Than wear the stamp of shame upon her brow, wealth
could not chase—

(E'en for a moment's space)—away, nor sceptred sway
efface.

And now, upon the maiden's waking dream—

Silent, and slow, the phantoms of the past

Arose !—phantoms—that now the present seem—

Although, alas ! how short such dream can last !

Again—her lover wooed her by the side

Of sparkling Deva's swiftly flowing tide ;

Again—she was the loved, and blest,

Sole empress of Alonzo's breast !—

Again—the blissful hours they had spent,

Were passed !—hours—that swift as lightning
went :

For, Mirth and Joy had wing'd their flight,

And Love had given them his light !

Rose then her royal brother's form,

Like some huge rock mid thunder-storm !

Then came, as though in mockery, the peaceful hour

When battle's tide was o'er—and he would seek her
bower,

And fondly fold her in his arms, and gaze upon her
face,

Praising, with all a brother's pride, each new, and bud-
ding grace ;

While she—would weep with joy in his embrace.

And loose the helmet from his head—

And wipe the streaming plumes of red

Yet wet, with blood that he had shed !—

And he would smile, and gently thank the maid,
And swear, that she should be, "a warrior's
bride."—

But, mid her happiness, the dream
Was changed—a cloud, came o'er the scene,
The savage Moors had waged a desp'rate war,
And spears, and swords, were gleaming in the air;
Then, Roderick, lay upon the bloody plain—
And craz'd La Cava* saw her lover slain—
And shriek'd, and tore her raven hair—
"And moan'd, and plain'd in wild despair!"

Then, was she captive led!

Pelayo, hid, or dead!—

And, next, dark days of wo, that after came,
Crowded in hateful visions on her brain;
Until, with superstitious fear, she grew
More pale—but, swift, the flush of pride would
glow
Upon her cheek, and o'er her marble brow;
Chasing, indignantly, their pallid hue!—

VII.

And now a sun-bright beam shot from the sky,
That dazzled, with its light, her staring eye.
It came—the herald of more galling pain—
For, with it, recollection dawn'd again,
And wildly rose her shriek on high,
When she beheld the sun-lit sky;

* Florinda La Cava was the unfortunate cause of this bloody war between the Goths and Moors. She was dishonoured by Roderick, the last Gothic king, and cousin of Pelayo; and her father, indignant at the betrayer of his daughter's innocence, burning with revenge, invited the Moors into Spain; thus commenced that fatal war, the long duration of which was terminated after many years by the valorous exertions of the Goths.

Unseen by her, had glow'd the dawn,
And deepen'd, slowly, into morn ;—
And now with clasped hands---and frantic mien---
And streaming hair---and eyes that wildly gleam---
“ O God ! ” she cried, “ the hour then is near !
Accursed Munuza, now, will soon be here ! ”
Then, sinking back again,
As frenzied, and in pain
She sat---few moments, lost in grief ;
Till burning tears, that brought relief,
Swell'd in her eyes---the first for many days---their
flow
Was long congeal'd, by deep despair, and speechless
wo ;
But soon, again, her visage took
Its former firm, and wonted look ;
“ Yes, I was right---the fatal hour near---
The chieftain will indeed ere long be here---
And say, my heart, art thou well nerved !---
Yes, yes, that heart hath never swerved---
It can resist the Moor---his will
Shall bend me not---e'en though it kill !---
But oh ! to life I still have claims---
Alonzo, yet, lies bleeding in his chains---
What hand---what voice---shall calm or sooth his
pains?---
Would, that th' exchange of this poor life, could give
thee thine !
How gladly would the holy sacrifice be mine !
And thou wouldst bless me as I die---though far
away
That holy breath, would gently still around me
stray---

And like an angel's spirit hover near,
To waft my soul from scenes of earthly fear !”
Then, all her feelings wrought to agony,
She sank upon her tottering knees to pray !
 “ O Thou ! whose Great All-seeing eye---
 Rules the wide earth---and heaven high !
 Oh ! stretch on *me* thy avenging hand---
 But save *him* from the fiery brand !
Shower down unheard-of curses, thick as rain
Upon my head---but oh ! let them not stain
 One angel look of his with pain !
 Heap ! heap ! thy rage on me !
 For still, I 'll worship thee
 To all eternity !
But oh ! on him---let kindly dews of heaven fall,
To heal his wounds---assuaging slavery's bitter
 thrall !”---
With calmer look, and smile, almost, of former
 years,
She rose---while, torrent-like, the brightly gushing
 tears
 Fell scalding on her thin pale hands !
And, as she still in sun-light stands---
They sparkle like the radiant drops from angel eyes,
Bright token that within the skies,
Her prayers in seraph voices rise !---

VIII.

Scarce had she strove their course to stay,
And wipe each briny trace away—
When hark ! a heavy tread—a footstep near—
Broke like a thunder peal upon her ear !

Her chamber door flew open wide—
The dreaded chief stood by her side !
And in his eye, a tiger joy—a triumph shone,
That plainly told he thought the prey secure—his
own!—

“ My beauteous maid ! ” (he thus the fair address’d)
“ Once more, that form, so angel-like, doth bless
Mine eyes—and glowing brighter than yon Sun,
With whose glad light my hour of bliss hath come !

For now, thy loved and tuneful voice
Shall speak its last, decisive choice !

Mine ears have waited long for that dear word,
That binds me here---thy slave---as well as lord ! ”

He stopp’d—she did not move, or speak—
But, a faint tinge spread o’er her cheek,
(Like Aurora’s first sunny streak,
When through the sky she darts her way,
While round her thousand beauties play.)

’T was but the passing glow

Of proud disdain and wo,

And her indignant silence plainly told
The thoughts her swelling bosom scarce could hold.

With angry air—but half assum’d—

And sterner voice, he thus resum’d :—

“ Lady ! it suits not for that lovely brow
To bend with haughty frowns upon me now,
I ill can brook thy scorn---

And least---upon this morn !

’T is not my ardent love, alone, I plead ;
But, princess ! canst thou see thy people bleed ?
And hear the widows, and the orphans cry,
Refusing yet---thy succour to supply—
To still their wounds, and heal our enmity ?

My love—thy wrongs—the welfare of this infant land--
All, bid me claim that precious boon—thy long-sought
hand !

Then shall be sheath'd the Moorish sword ;
And thou—the bond of peace—adored
By all—a thousand tongues shall shed
Their richest blessings on thy head.

But, if my will you disobey—shift then the scene—
Behold thyself my slave—the veriest wretch I ween
'Neath heaven's canopy ! Say, were it best with me
To rule these fair dominions ; or thus accurs'd to be?"

IX.

" No ! chieftain, no !" she cried,

" I would not be thy bride

Although the torturing iron now were hot--

And I—the victim of its hellish art !

Thy hands are reeking with my people's blood !

Thy heart and tongue have curs'd my people's
God !

How can I clasp that bloody hand in mine--

And vow, my God---shall be the same as thine ?

Louder than e'er---my nation's tongues

Would plead, in vain, my nation's wrongs--

The sun---would veil his blessed light,

And shed o'er earth eternal night !

And Spain—would weep, that such a blight

Should stain her hallow'd name

With everlasting shame !

And more than this—know'st not my faith was
given—

My vow—before the face of smiling heaven

Was freely to another plight ?—
One hand alone, can break that chain,
And Moor ! it never will be thine !—

X.

In vain, Munuza wildly storm'd—
And soothing words he tried in vain ;
For both, the princess well was arm'd,
And stood, in silence, and disdain.
At length, more bitterly his mind was bent,
And thus, his fury's fiercest heat, he spent ;
“ Lady ! thou know'st not how boundless is my power !
How harrowing the vengeance I will take,
For this unseemly scorn—thou 'lt weep the hapless
hour,
That you incurr'd, my fell, undying hate !—
Pause well ! while yet there 's time—ere its full
weight,
Is hurl'd, like some stupendous ruin, crushing 'neath
its fall,
In one o'erwhelming blow ! thyself—thy friends—thy
country—all ! ”
“ Chieftain ! thy menaces are vain—
Rebounding on thyself again !
My soul knows not the cowardly throb of fear—
Thy darkest purpose cannot wring one tear !
Proud, ruthless man ! thy threats I do defy—
And, for my honour—willingly would die !
Think'st then that life is dear ? ”
“ Nay, not thy own—but that of one—
Whose death is far more near ! ”

And on Munuza's lip, the while,
There play'd a dark, and fiendish smile.
 "'T is there---proud maid ! 't is there---
 Thy heart-strings I will tear---
 There---wring thee to the soul !
 There---make thee feel my thrall !
Alonzo ! yes---Alonzo's self shall die !
 Thy eyes shall see his death !
Thy ears shall hear the groan---the stifled cry---
 While parts the struggling breath !
 While I---will revel in the sight,
 And view his anguish with delight !
 There is no power man hath made---
 No piercing torture---shall not aid,
 To wring his soul, before it flee,
 And give as galling pain to thee !
Remember 't is thyself hath spoke his doom---
Thy will---hath laid Alonzo in the tomb !"

XI.

But hold ! 't were vain for me to try
To paint the wild, delirious eye---
The bursting soul's deep agony !
Then rather draw a veil between,
To shroud in night, that painful scene !
For, when the bosom's finest chord,
Thus rudely, cruelly, is jarr'd !
Oh ! who can tell the frenzy that succeeds ?
Not I---far greater skill than mine it needs !

XII.

"Munuza !" meltingly she cried,
"This blow indeed hath bow'd my pride !

If pity dwell within thy heart !
If yet the gate of mercy is not shut !
On me ! on me ! your fury dart---
Here---here---within my breast your vengeance
glut !

But spare Alonzo—spare my country's pride !
I can forget my wrongs, and all beside,
If you recall that harsh decree,
And turn your anger all on me !",
She stopp'd—and rais'd her tearful eye,
(Where Hope sat like a meteor bright,
Mid glowing rays of lustrous light)
Fearing—yet wishing for reply !
But, when it met by chance,
The chief's exulting glance—
A shudd'ring chill rang through her frame,
As she cower'd 'neath that glance of flame !

"Then at thy feet I bow my knee,
And thus implore thy clemency !
Oh ! speak ! Munuza ! Chief, in mercy speak—
I see the crimson flushing on thy cheek—
The tear is starting to thine eye—
It brings hope---joy---new life to me !
But speak the word---yes, yes, thou'lt spare his
life ? "---

"I will ! but first thou art my wedded wife !"
Coldly the chief replied,
"Princess, I will not chide---
His doom is placed within thy hands,
'T is in thy power to loose his bonds ;"

And he bent to raise the suppliant form,
 The flower broken by the storm !
 The princess started from the ground ! " And think'st
 thou this shall be
 The sacrifice to give him liberty ?---
 No never ! never ! rather let him die !---
 Yet ! "---and a thought glanced quickly through her
 heart,
 That seem'd a deeper anguish to impart ;
 " Yet---for his life my country calls---
 His guiding arm may break her thralls !---
 But can I stoop so low ?
 Forget my plighted vow---
 Renounce my God---though it perchance may save
 My country, and my lover, from the grave ? "---
 And once again to the stern chief she turn'd,
 While in her eye the light of madness burn'd !---

XIII.

" Alas ! if ever thou hast known the throb of love---
 Oh, hear me ! for, gentle pity may thy bosom move !
 Oft have thy lips---thy heart perchance---love's lan-
 guage told ;
 That heart is not---Oh ! cannot be---of iron mould.
 By this redeeming act, then teach me, too,
 It can the swell of kindly pity know !
 Why darkens thus thy brow ?
 Oh ! frown not on me so !
 It tells, thy soul is darker than the dungeon's gloom,
 Where the glad sun can never shine !
 Nor one bright ray of light divine,
 E'en with a transient beam, the horrid depths illumine !---

Wilt thou not yield, when, kneeling, Ormesinda
begs ?

“ Oh ! she hath drunk the cup of sorrow to the dregs—
Yet feels, however, full of gall—

This—is the bitterest drop of all ! ”—

“ Princess ! ” Munuza said in lofty tone,

“ To me, thou hast no spark of kindness shown—
Alonzo shall be freed---when thou wilt be my bride !
My purpose cannot change---think well ere *you* de-
cide---

For, if thy answer still is in disdain---

Ere twice yon sun shall veil its light again,

Thy lover---shall be one amongst the thousands
slain !

XIV.

In frenzied stupor of despair

The princess stood, like statue, there !

A thousand thoughts rush'd o'er her mind---

A thousand visions, ill defined,

Where all the feelings of a woman's heart,

United to the patriot's soul---bore part !

Her breast was noble---and her spirit proud and
high---

But, yet, the light of tenderness oft in her eye

Wasseen---it was a struggling of the great and weak,

Within a mind, where both alike found dwelling
seat :

For in Alonzo she beheld, at once, her country's
friend---

And the loved being, with whose life, her only joy must
end !---

Then rose, 'mid clouds of fearful gloom
 His pallid spectre from the tomb,
 And then, she heard the bloody ghost upbraid
 Her rashness---that within the tomb had laid
 Her lover's form---while yet his country bled !
 She saw the deep and gaping wound---the blood-dim'd
 sword---

And heard the hollow voice---e'en with its parting
 word---

In curses breathe her name---
 A horrid purpose cross'd her brain---
 Enough !---'t is done ! her course is ta'en !
 " Then be it so,"---she fainting cried,
 " The Christian is the Pagan's bride !"

XV.

" A blessing on that gentle tongue, my loved,
 My bright, my fairest one ! well hast thou prov'd
 Thy loyal soul !"---" Oh, cease thy transports !
 cease---

She cried---" one boon I ask---'t is to release
 Alonzo and the youth !---thou hast my plighted hand,
 Fear not---for Ormesinda will not break that bond :
 Thou know'st 't will be the last, though saddest time
 We meet---I shall not see him when I 'm thine !
 Then grant that none but me may give him liberty !"

" Stay---stay---'t is granted, plead no more,
 Thy slightest wish is now my law !
 I do not doubt thy word,
 Go, reap thy just reward,
 Behold thy former lord !

More blest than him, to-night, am I,
Soon to possess such constancy ! ”

XVI.

When fickle man's unyielding heart
The flame of passion moves,
Soon as he feels the deeper smart,
And owns, or thinks he loves;
How do all barriers fade before his sight,
How boundless, and how great becomes his might !
Go place the fair upon the mountain's brow,
Circled with rocks, and capp'd with snow,
He climbs the steepy precipice's brink,
From all its dangers does not shrink,
He scoffs at winds, and clouds, and storms,
His foot grows lighter than the fawn's,
And rushes furious on
Until the prize is won!
And woman, too, when in thy gentle breast,
Unpeaceful love hath made his downy nest,
Ah ! whither, whither, will he lead ?
Who can resist the urchin's speed ?
If honour frown—or once should bid adieu—
She leaves a thorny path indeed for you !
The youthful God will headlong bear thee on,
Nor stop—till ruin's dizzy height is won.
In vain you look for safer road,
Remorse will not forget to goad
Thy heart---more vainly too in pleasure's gulf you
seek
To hide the wound ; still will the fiend her fury
wreak---

(Just like the punishment Prometheus long has
 borne,
 Whose wounds, soon as they 'gin to heal, are
 quickly torn
 Afresh) till maddened with the pain,
 Thou 'lt often turn to seek again
 Bright virtue's stainless smile, and find it fled ! while
 evermore,
 Remorse will ply her sting, and thou---long for the
 peace of yore.
 You who have seen proud beauty's eye when most
 't was fair ;
 Have felt her glowing heart when most 't was light
 and pure ;
 Fairer than all, paint Ormesinda in thy soul---
 Yet, now her bosom feels love's deep despairing
 thrall,
 Behold her, now---the noble---great---dishonour's
 child,
 To shield the youth on whom her fond affection
 smiled.
 Woo not, fair maids, the urchin's form,
 Lest in your breast he plant a thorn ;
 See you his dimpled hands two arrows hold ?
 The one is lead, the other some call gold ;*
 And if the former pierce your heart,
 Repentance follows quick the smart ;
 When on your loves both friends and foes do smile,
 'Tis well---but oh ! when sorrow comes the while,

* Alluding to the fable of there being two Cupids, Eros and Anteros ; the one bore a golden dart, which occasioned successful love, while the other carried a leaden one that caused hatred.

(For such the leaden dart portends
Although in joy the gold one ends,
Love round your hearts may cease to play,
And bear the bark of peace away !

END OF CANTO THIRD.

P E L A Y O :

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.



CANTO FOURTH.

PELAYO :

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

What name on earth, or heaven, can be,
So dear to man, as liberty!
Cold is the heart that does not bound,
Whene'er that spirit-stirring sound
Is heard—so cold, that Nature never made a heart
To which that one, inspiring word, could not impart
A thrill of joy!--by her just laws, all--all--are
free--
Nor lordly man--nor lowly beast---knows slavery!
The very reptile, spurned beneath our feet,
By instinct, feels that liberty is sweet :--
Who---that hath lived 'neath heaven's wide ex-
panse--
Hath breathed at large the freshened air--
And felt life's buoyant current lightly dance
Through all his veins--though pallid care
Hath plough'd her iron fingers on his brow---though
mean
His state--deserted---desolate--and poor---as e'en
If misery--that ragged God---
With pestilential step had trod

His dwelling---hath not felt that freedom's name
Was dearer, far, than wealth, or empty fame ?

II.

The warrior who draws his steel
To shield his country's danger'd weal,
Feels not the coward pulse of fear—high 'mid the
fight
The form of Liberty, is ever in his sight !
One hand the banner of freedom rears—
But the visage of Death in her other appears---
Like the lightning, swift—
He seizes her gift—
Nor cares which he may reach—
There's liberty in each !—
But he, whose wrongs no blood can wash away—
Whose chains, no struggle break—
For in the dungeon's wall—'neath despot's sway—
What vengeance may he wreak ?—
'T is there—'t is there—that slavery galls the
most—
To him, the very name of Vengeance, lost !
He cannot have the sweet relief,
That she will ever give—
In sighs alone can vent his grief,
In bondage still must live !—

III.

The stilly hour of midnight came again,
And came—scarce known—scarce reck'd—by
those who 'd lain

For many a weary night and day,
 Uncheer'd by hope's sweet gladd'ning ray
 Within the dungeon's loathsome wall,—
 With heavy hearts, and heavier thrall.
 'Twas there 'mid clouds of low'ring gloom,
 The Christian youths waited their doom ;—
 The taper's blue and flickering light
 Told them alone 't was dead of night ;
 For faint the sun of day could come
 Within their dismal dungeon's home ;
 And now, the waning taper burnt so dim,
 That (as the moonbeam stole across the flame,)
 It shed a spectral light on all around—
 While Fancy in each dreary corner found
 A pallid face—or ghostly shadow of some form
 That in that deep vault's horrid gloom, till death,
 had worn
 Its chains—and there—had ling'ring lived—unpi-
 tied died—
 Victim perchance of worldly tyranny, and pride !

IV.

Midnight her sceptre sways—it is the fearful hour,
 When the mind of man loses its firmer tone and
 power ;
 When the sage, who jests at unseen sprites,
 A spectral shape in every niche will see—
 And the warrior start at shadowy sights,
 He laughs to scorn, as fantasies, by day—
 But there were two who heeded not how near,
 Time's laggard wing had brought that hour of
 fear—

For night, and day, alike, were sad, and drear !
Unmark'd by them, the heavy hours dragg'd on,
For liberty, sweet liberty ! was gone !—

Though, on the cheek of one—

The first light shade of manhood's down,
Its velvet cov'ring scarce had shown ;
Yet still, an air of pensive thought

Sat on his open brow,
That told his destiny was fraught,
With less of joy, than wo !—

His look was sad—his head upraised—
And strangely, and cold, his dark eye gazed
Upon the mildew drops, by turns that fell
Splashing along the damp and loathsome cell.

A settled grief clouded his brow—
Such grief, as youth can seldom know !
His thoughts, though wandering far away,
Yet, not on scenes of gladness stray ;
For, o'er his heart a chilling blight,
Has changed---youth's sunny dawn---to night !

V.

Not so, his noble comrade's brow—
Not there, the look of settled wo,
The shade of deep corroding grief—
That gives the mourner no relief !
His, was the agony where lingering hope,
Anon, in fits of sun-bright radiance broke,
But making sorrow more intense—
By the wild anguish of suspense !
A restless wildness shot from his eye,
That still, untamed, glanced proud and high !

Though stretch'd upon a meagre couch of straw
The strong knit form—that well had armour bore—
His flushing cheek its look of pride still wore !
A thousand thoughts, that quick as lightning came,
With strong emotions shook his sinewy frame !
Sometimes, his restless eye would fiercely glare—
As though he felt the hour of vengeance near !

Then, fled the momentary beam—
And to mute horror all the rest gave place,
As though, some wildly fearful dream—
That even Reason's power, could not chase—
Flash'd, scorching, o'er his frenzied mind—
And with a scorpion's grasp—entwin'd
And wrung his very soul
With thoughts beyond control !
Until with clenched teeth—frenzied—astray—
He started from the pallet where he lay,
Madden'd by dreams his fancy sought !
Visions, his fever'd brain had wrought !
A sound—a stealthy step—breaks on the silent
night !

Surely the Moorish jailor's step is wond'rous light?—
'T would rather seem the tread of some gay fairy
sprite,

Who comes, from her bright realms aloft,
The pris'ner's fleeting hopes to waft
On high—who else could come with step so soft ?
As neared the sound—closely, and long,
His comrade's hand Alonzo wrung :

“ The fatal hour is come, my friend—
We 'll meet it firmly to the end !

The tyrant is not sated yet--
 Our blood must soon his fury glut :--
 E'en now, dost hear the bolts undrawn ?
 But, 't is for thee, alone, I mourn--
 And I--alas ! unhappy I--
 Have marr'd thy glorious destiny !
 My hand hath pluck'd the blossoms of thy youth,
 And given thee--victim to untimely death !"
 " Nay, cease that care,"--the other cries,
 " It is with joy the soldier dies !
 I have no hope--no stay--in life ;
 Though young--I much have seen of strife ?
 And much, alas ! of sorrow known ;
 Till---now my heart so cold is grown,
 It cannot know another blight---
 Without one sigh, one pang I die,
 Be it to-morrow or to-night !
 I long to snap the chord, that links me here
 To this poor earth--where all to me that's dear---
 Is lost---is gone--alas ! fore'er---
 When, soaring in some other sphere,
 E'en if no more of joy I find--
 There's less of pain than's left behind !"
 These words were utter'd in the bitter tone,
 That told he little reck'd what fate might come !--

VII.

But hark ! the last harsh, grating bolt undraws--
 How deep--how awful--the ensuing pause !
 Each muscle quiver'd in Alonzo's cheek,
 As though one, lingering tie not yet was broke,

Canto IV.] THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.

31

That bound his spirit still to life !

'T was but a momentary strife !

The struggle o'er---sternly his eye was raised
To meet his doom---it matters not how'er severe
It be---the warrior is himself---how can he fear ?

But, while with careless glance the other gazed,

Oh ! who Alonzo's boundless joy can tell,

When Ormesinda glided in the cell !

Frantic with hope---surprise---he flew---

And to his bosom closely drew

The trembling, agitated maid,

Who could not now his love upbraid :

Few moments, clasped within each other's arms---

Fled in that dream of bliss, their late alarms !

What was---what would be---all that threaten'd
yet---

In the sweet rapture of that thought---they met!--

Were all in a bewild'ring trance forgot !

They met---enough in that one word

To heal the broken shatter'd chord !

They met---and cheek to cheek, and heart to
heart,

Their fears upon the wings of love depart !

The former pangs that wrung, have lost their
smart---

And sorrow fades, like dew, in air !

There is enough of rapture there---

Enough of overflowing bliss,

In that one, sweet embrace---

To banish thence the sighs of care---

Repay whole years of loneliness---

And hours of suffering chase!--

Alas ! how easily the heart is lured !
We banish wo, in hopes of bliss secured,
 Drink of the cup, while on the brim
 Delight in luring foam doth swim—
 Yet oh ! drain but the sparkling draught,
 And bitter comes ere all is quaffed—
The form of sorrow lurks beneath—just hidden by
That snowy foam—an empty froth that tempts the
 eye—
 But sinking deep within the heart,
 Imprints a wound that ne'er shall part !—

VIII.

Not long the happy dream could last—again
Upon the maiden's heart, a thrill of pain
 With chilling sense of truth, returns,
 And in conviction madly burns !
She gently loosed the arms, that round
Her slender form had closely wound :
“ My love ! ”—her faltering voice could breathe
 no more—
For deep she felt her all of bliss was o'er—
That she had bade farewell ! to hope and joy at
 once,
And seen their parting smile—while in that blissful
 trance !
Now, rising 'bove her bosom's weaker guest,
She feels the patriot's soul glow in her breast !
“ Christians !—My countrymen—live, and be free !
’T is Ormesinda gives you liberty !
And for her bleeding country's right,

(To break these chains—your valour's blight)---
She risks her all on earth, to-night !
See, in her cause, ye well do fight---
Revenge! Revenge! be that your cry, nor cease---
Till floods of Moorish blood—shall bid you,
peace !---
With kindling cheek, firm tone, and flashing eye,
The maiden stood—as if 't was from the sky
She drew her deep inspired energy !---
The youth mark'd not her lofty look—nought could
he see,
Save hope and joy—so wrapped in blissful ecstasy !

“ And art indeed—indeed restored—
My Ormesinda ! my adored !
Given me back, almost from death again---
With heart to thy Alonzo all the same ! ”

“ Oh ! stop---in pity stop ! ” she cried,
“ Thy words, like burning poison, glide,
And rend my already bursting heart,
That could to thee a tale impart,
Would freeze thy very soul to hear,
And chain thee like a statue there !
But no !—not yet, the blissful veil
Must fall—too soon thou wilt bewail
Thy fate ! ”

“ I feel it all—I am beloved no more !---
There, Fate, alone hath power to wound—to tear---
If Ormesinda's changed---then all indeed is o'er!---
Tell me the worst—my soul is nerved to bear ! ”---

“ Nay wrong me not---as purely lov'd thou art,
As when I gave thee, first, my youthful heart !
As when by Covadonga's side
I first became thy affianced bride !
Ask me no more---thou 'lt soon know all---
Perchance, too soon, these words recall,
And weep, that our young dream is past---
Yet, ah ! it was too bright to last !---
Nay, do not speak---short space the mystery must yet
remain---
Thy words but wake my grief anew---a grief, that now
---is vain !
Enough, I love thee still---but cannot more explain !
Thou lov'st me all too well, Alonzo, to complain !—
And, for that youth, whose valiant arm so well hath
shielded thee—
If 't will the debt repay—I give him life, and liberty !”

“ Lady ! thy bounties are bestowed on one,
Who scarce can strive to feel their mighty sum :
Thou givest life to a wretch who prizes it not,
E'en when, with liberty, the boon is bought !
Save---'t were, upon the battle plain,
To lose it, nobly, once again !”—

“ And have such dismal thoughts, already, preyed
Upon a heart so young ?”—she pitying said ;
“ Whence is thy grief ?—tell me, for I have known
to mourn
And yet may give that hope which long hath gone
From me—Oh ! never, never, to return !”

“ Princess ! the voice of pity strangely sounds
Upon an ear, that harshness often wounds .
Thanks for the goodness that I must revere---
But my tale 's too sad---too long---for thee to
hear ! ”

“ Nay, youth ! the only happiness now mine
Is, soothing hearts, hapless and torn, as thine ;
I know not why—yet would I hear thy tale,
I may not aid—but, can at least bewail,
And mourning with thee—soothe thy wo !
'T is sweetest balm the wounded know ! ”——

“ Lady ! the youngest heart feels oft severest blight !
And mine, knows that of endless and desponding
night !

Night—where no day can come between—
Or Hope one instant shed her beam !
If, still you please—I 'll 'count the story of my life ;
Though short—it hath been one filled with tempestuous
strife :---

Thou too, Alonzo, oft hast mark'd my hopeless
gloom,

And question'd of the cause----
Forgive, that ere I oped a heart, which griefs
entomb,

Even to thee---I 'd pause !---
Though, to an aching breast, 't is sweet relief,
In other kindred hearts to pour its grief:—
My woes—so deep a sepulchre had found,
'T was bitter agony t' unclothe the wound ! ”——

IX.

ANTONIO'S HISTORY.

“ Mid Asturia's wilds and mountains high,
Whose lofty brows shoot to the sky,
In a low vale, near Deva's stream,
A little village may be seen ;
Where the rustic mountaineer, humble and happy
dwells,
Or in his cot beneath, or on the neighbouring hills—
'T was there mid rugged wilds, that I was born,
'T was there I met Affliction's wildest storm !
My life had been a summer's day,
But, one dark cloud obscured its ray :—
On cliffs, that overhang the deep,
Whose path is dangerous and steep,
The eagle builds her nest ;
And to her broodlings brings the prey,
She seeks for at the dawn of day,
Ever the forest's best—
And 't is the sport of maid and youth,
Who 'd pledge their vows of love and truth,
To climb the rocks, and seize the prey,
Bearing the hard-earned prize away :
The beauteous maiden leads the chase—
Her lover—follows in the race ;
While she, like Daphne, flies—
Apollo, he pursues—
Now swift as the doe she'll dart—but soon retreat,
For, if his daring steps than hers, more fleet,
She is the prize—and on the mountain's brow
The maid, and lover pledge their mutual vow !

And there on stated days they meet,
And climb the rocky heights, more fleet
Than bounds the wildest mountain deer—
E'en though the precipice yawn anear !
Though lighter far than sportive winds they glide,
There 's scarce a youth returns without a bride :
Then feast they gladly on the spoils they bring,
While soon succeeds, the merry dance, and song :
It is an hour of mirth, and all are gay,
To welcome many a maiden's bridal day !
But Memory—restless Memory—cease thy inward
 strife !
Let me not dwell upon the scenes that give thee life.

X.

“ Though all the maids were young, and many fair,
When 't was my lot their dangerous sports to
 share,
Yet beam'd one form of rosy gladness there,
Whose beauty's light outshone the rest, as far
As the golden sun outshines each twinkling star !
Words are too feeble—weak—to tell
Her beauty's thrilling, dazzling spell !
The heart alone can feel
How fair her breast of steel :
For, spite of all her charms combin'd—
Nature, enraptured with delight
That she had form'd creature so bright,
Forgot to give—a heart—a mind—
Yet all who dared an instant to behold,
Were charm'd—enamour'd—though herself was
 cold ;

Her sunny hair in golden showers fell
Around her guileless bosom's heaving swell,
But when, mid ardour of the chase,
It floated in clouds half o'er her face,
And waved luxuriant round her form,
Tinged by the sun's last radiant beam,
She seem'd a thing of air, and not of earth,
A beauteous creature of immortal birth !
And when her white arm flung
All back those tresses long—
Her face, glowing with life, flashed like a meteor
glancing by,
And rivetted, as by the basilisk's force, the gazer's
eye :
Nor then could fade th' illusive dream,
For, to his fancy she would seem
An angel, that his mind had painted there,
Upon a sunlit cloud, floating in air :
No shade of care sat on her dazzling brow,
No touch of tender thought upon her cheek,
Nor in her radiant eyes, not e'en the glow
Of Hope (that lives with all) its magic spoke :
Those eyes—their hue how can I tell ?
Enough ! that in them lies a spell,
Whose power can entrance,
And dazzle with a glance !
It seemed as though some talisman were hid
Beneath their silken lashes' snowy lid :
Oh ! could the diamond's lustre, vie
With the sparkling glory of that eye ?

No—the diamond's self would palely shine,
When near Ximena's* glance divine!
She thought not of the future, or the past,
Present—sweet present—was alone express'd
In her joyous air, and thrilling smile,
Her innocent, unconscious wile !
She was a glorious creature of the sun,
The spirit of the winds, the dews, the storm,
And pierced the ear of heaven with her mirthful
songs,
Just from the glowing instinct which to a bird be-
longs.
Her look was gaiety—her voice was music's swell!
More sweetly clear, more flowing than the murmur-
ing rill,
Near which she loved, alone, (though joyful still) to
dwell :

Her walk was a light bounding dance—
The meteor's flash, her ev'ry glance—
The music of her laugh so wild, and shrill,
Echoed again, and again, from hill to hill,
As though the mountains loved its joyful thrill !
The soul of wit sparkled in all she spoke,
Yet sparkling—withered where by chance it
broke :

But still unconscious of her power,
She wounds, and heals, in ev'ry hour.
From the swiftest youths she ever shrieking fled,
As though the wings of fear her flight had sped,

* The outlines of the story of Ximena are mostly taken from Ritchie's tale of the " Dream Girl," except that the authoress has thought fit to shift the scene from Languedoc, in France, to the wilds of Spain.

And, as with careless look she gazed
From pinnacles, the fawn approached with fear,
Her wild laugh, loud and long was raised,
(Whose clear tones rang upon the distant ear):
As, bounding back again, she held on high her prize,
Jeering at those who followed her—but with their
eyes :

Then would the varying colour of her cheek
The pleasure of her youthful triumph speak.—

XI.

“ With charms so great—divine—
How many hearts might not Ximena break ?
How many breasts with hopeless anguish shake ?
Alas ! she broke but one—’t was mine !—
At length I saw she had no soul,
Nor thought of others’ wo or weal ;
I felt (if one she had) her mind
But as reflecting mirror shined :
I left my village—left my native home—
A wanderer—on the world’s wide waste to roam.
I sought upon the battle plain
In Glory’s wreath t’ enshrine my name !
I sought, with feelings desperate,
To rise above my hopeless fate !
Seizing my sword—I cried,
‘ Be thou my faithful Bride !’
Since then—I ’ve drunk of blood with never-dying
thirst—
Have rushed where the battle hottest raged, and
braved the worst—
Peri’d my life, and asked of death to come—
Who fickle fled—because I did not shun !

I've been a beggar, and a soldier both,
And while it gave me change---was nothing loth !
Women I've seen in ev'ry varied stage,
And strove the hearts of many to engage ;
Have talked and dreamed of love by beauty's side,
With wooing lip, moved many a heart of pride,
From the high dame, sporting in beauty's bower,
(That beauty which may fade within an hour,)
To the gentle maid whose soul in ev'ry word
Bursts forth---whose heart upon her lip is heard :
But ne'er amid the rovings of my truant eye
Has form in brightness like Ximena's glided by :
And still, she lives, a monument, within my breast,
But statue-like, and cold, a lifeless, chilling guest !
And though my lips no longer move
To the music of her name---
And though my tongue has ceased to prove
My heart is still the same---
The spirit's spell cannot be shaken,
By ev'ry light and transient wind,
Or the vows of faithful love once spoken,
Like dew-drops, fade, upon the mind !
Nor fond affection's tear, at parting shed,
Melt as the waves upon the waters breast ;
The smile of love may be forever fled---
But still in hallowed memory's shrine 'twill rest !

XII.

“ And now, fair lady ! thou hast heard my tale,
And know'st the sorrow cank'ring at my heart---
But still thy power, however great, must fail
To bid that deep corroding grief depart :

My soul is bitter as Marah's wave, and there
Sits, brooding still, the echo of despair !
Too deep that soul is shrouded now in sorrow,
To know the sunshine of a gayer morrow :
One fading star is left, alone, to shine—
My Country's hope ! through good, or ill, 't is
thine !—

For, when the Moor had forged our freeman's
chain,

And Christians were in bondage held, or slain,
Spurr'd on by Glory, and Ambition---I was wean'd
From early days, that then but fading visions
seemed !

Beneath Pelayo's sacred banner, when I fought,

And when, with his, the battle cast my lot,
I little thought of love, or cowardly ease, I wot ;
E'en thou---Ximena's self---wert all forgot !---

But soon we failed---the strife was o'er,

And gloomy sorrow came once more ;

For dearly as I loved to wield the lance,
Yet dearer to my soul, Ximena's glance !

I ne'er recall its flashing beams,

But shapes---such as in golden dreams

O'er the poet's ardent fancy gleams,

With all their luring spells usurp my mind,

And oft in ecstasy my senses bind :

But now---the vain illusion's fled,

E'en Fancy's gentle self is dead,---

The cypress bough waves o'er her head !

Though sometimes, still her spirits come

To visit now their former home ;

But not with sportive smiles,
With sweet, enchanting wiles---
Their death-like forms---their icy hands---now coldly
press
Upon the heart that once they came, alone, to bless!"

XIII.

"Away! fond youth! hope is not fled---"
With cheering look the princess said;
"Although thy morning sky perchance was dark,
More gay the noontide sun, shall light thy bark,
And guide it with a gentler beam
Adown life's ever-checkered stream!
Like Fortune---Fate is still a fickle dame,
And shows the night, to bring the morn again;
But not like Fortune is she blind,
And courting---yet may make her kind:
Why shouldst thou thus fond hope destroy?
Youth may have made Ximena coy---
Return, then, to thy native land,
And seek again the fair one's hand;
In a propitious moment press thy suit
Thou'lt win her---and perhaps a heart, to boot,
Whose first warm love 't was thine to wake---'t will
well repay
For many an hour, in hopeless sorrow worn away!
The long pent current loosed; in torrents then shall
flow,
And give thee more of love than other hearts could
know.
The gentle maid who kindly yields,
But seldom love's deep passion feels;

Yet woo her when she gives thee but disdain---
Thou 'lt find a gem, will well requite the pain :
Once found---'t will cast o'er thee a never fading
ray,
Whose lustre shall illume thy path by night and
day !---

And thou, Alonzo, sleep to-night in peace ;
To-morrow, Ormesinda's troubles cease !
I bind this scarf upon thy arm,
Swear---while with life that arm is warm,
Thou wilt espouse thy country's cause---
In her---forgetting other woes !
It is enough !---thy looks have sworn,
Adieu to both---I must be gone !---

XIV.

Then, as a spirit fades, she glided from the cell !
'T were vain the joy of either youth to tell,
For both seemed bound as by a blissful spell.
“ Did she not say,” Alonzo cried,
“ To-morrow that her troubles cease ?
Great Heaven ! and will she be my bride
Before the morrow's sun decrease !
Oh ! joy, Antonio, hope and liberty are thine,
But happier I---for with it, Ormesinda's mine !
Come on, the bolts are all undrawn,
Let us away, ere breaks the morn ;
It is no dream---no grim and watching jailor's face.
Or bolt, or bar, will now our sweet reality chase ! ”
With bounding step they leave the prison's gloom,
And reach the air and light of heaven soon.

While every object that they meet
 Brings recollection sad, or sweet :
 And changed Antonio too, seemed blythe and gay,
 As bidding to his friend adieu
 He turned—but where, he scarcely knew—
 Until his steps by instinct took the way
 That near his native village lay.
 Oh ! Love, what wilt thou not forgive !
 In spite of scorn thy fires live,
 Ay—e'en when ev'ry other zeal has fled—
 Unperishing—till Memory's self is dead !

XV.

Oh ! who hath taught thee, urchin God,
 So ably thus to wield thy rod,
 Then, give the wounded, healing balm,
 From Hope's gay bosom, ever warm ?
 Her glitt'ring wings around thee shine,
 Shedding more lustrous light o'er thine !
 Thy smiles may sleep—but cannot die—
 They soon are waked by the radiancy
 Of beauty's ever sparkling eye !
 Thou canst not feel the ravages of time,
 True love, to long eternity will shine !
 Not even death, young imp ! can conquer thee ;
 When Hope—last that the magic box unclosed—
 doth fade,
 Thy potency in youth's gay dress will be arrayed,
 Upon the marble throne of Constancy !—
 Thou rul'st at once, the sceptre and the sword !
 At banquet hall—or cotter's humble board—

By all thy subjects still adored—
Yet art thou not a lenient lord !
For, he that tastes thee—feels thy sting—
And ever views thy flutt'ring wing,
That seems as it would fly—while yet it stays—
And round us still in sportive torture plays—
That soars in flight—with double power to stoop
again—
And oft inconstant seems—more constant to re-
main.

END OF CANTO FOURTH.

P E L A Y O :

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.



CANTO FIFTH.

PELAYO:

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

Day dawn'd again, as brightly fair,
As if to none it beamed with care,
And glowing nature sweetly smiled on all,
As if no shadow on such morn could fall!
And list—a distant murmuring sound
Of tender music breathes around,
And lightly tripping o'er the green,
Behold yon merry damsel train,
Sporting so airy light,
Before the dazzled sight,
That you might deem a ring of elfin sprites,
Such as dance the green-sward round on moon-
light nights,
Just straying from Titania's fairy train,
Were gliding o'er the dew-bespangled plain!
Their white robes flutter on the wooing wind,
The earliest flowers of spring their temples bind;
The violet blooms beneath their feet,
Filling the gale with fragrance sweet:—
And, mingled with the rose's wild perfume,
The loving woodbine, dawning just in bloom,

Is breathing all its fragrance on the air,
As if 't were conscious that its queen was there !

Oh ! who could think the brightest land on earth,
Where varied nature's fairest scenes have birth,
Romance, and beauty's queen ! fair Spain !
Would ever know foul slavery's name ?
That, blood and bondage both would stain,
The glory of yon verdant plain !
And those fair maids, who danced so light
In the first dawn of sunshine bright,

Alas ! that ever dreams of hot-breathed war
Their young, unconscious gaiety should mar !
Yet so it is—and they are doomed to roam,
Like forest deer, chased from their native home :
The lilies, blooming 'neath their feet,
With crimson blood will soon be wet ;
The Moors will seek their lone secluded vale,
And with them—comes destruction's blighting
gale !

Hispania ! once and thou wert spotless, fair—
'T is mournful task to tell what once you were !
Thy harvest waved its golden head
O'er plains, which since have drunk of blood !
Th' invader's foot hath trodden down thy flow'rets
gay,
The clash of arms frightened thy warbling birds away,
Their carrol'd songs no longer fill the air,
But dying groans, and suff'ers' moans,
And horrid curses, wrung by wild despair,

Mingling with the widow's and the orphan's wail,
Such are the sounds that sigh upon the gale !
From thousands driven from their homes,
Where'er the Moorish footstep comes !

II.

But yon fair maids, they nothing knew of strife ;
How should they ? in that hidden vale their life
Glides calmly, smoothly, on,
Unruffled by the storm !
Oh ! rather let me share their youthful sport,
Than mingle with such bliss one gloomy thought !
Upon the green a little altar stands,
Round which the maidens kneel with joined
hands ;
Then rising from the ring,
Their simple off'rings bring,
Wreaths woven of the fairest buds that bloom in
spring,
And round the altar's base their rosy tributes fling.
And then with verdant besoms—made
Of sweetest shrubs that scent the glade—
They sweep the dust that with the wind has
stray'd
Around their holy shrine !
Joy finds her dwelling place
Upon each beauteous face---
A lovely throne !—and there
She sits, beaming as fair,
And with as bright a ray, as that which shone
Round smiling Houries of the sunny eastern clime,
Those far-famed fairy creatures—who alone
Have charms that never fade, immortally divine !

III.

But who is she, that peerless maid, who towers 'bove
the rest ?

The beauteous priestess of the scene ? the planet
star !

Round which her satellites are shining ?—though
afar—

Their beauty beams from hers—'t is sure some bright
and heavenly guest,

Stooping to earth awhile,

To light it with her smile !——

Her form is rounded beauty's perfect mould,

Her eyes, have never aught but gladness told !

One long, unmingled, sunny scene of bliss,

And joy, too bright to dwell in world like this !

Those dazzling eyes have never wept—

Those radiant smiles have never slept—

Though changing oft their light—yet fading never:

And will they thus smile on—shine on—for ever ?

The tale will tell—but look upon her now,

While, sporting playful in that rosy glow

Of dawning light---and ask, if paradise hath more to
show !—

See, o'er her shoulder streams her sunny hair,

And many a waving curl floats in the air,

In long luxuriance—as though a veil was thrown

To shade that angel form,

Too bright at once to dawn

Upon the dazzled gazer's eye,

Lest it blind him with its radiancy !

And change him, (as Medusa did of old) to stone—

A thousand thoughts flash in her eyes at once,
Still changing—fleeting still—with ev'ry glance !
As images, that o'er the surface of a mirror glass,
In quick succession now appear—now brighten—vanish—pass—
Her airy footsteps trip so lightly o'er the green,
They scarcely press the flow'rets 'neath her feet,
which seem
But bowing to the one they own to be their Queen !

IV.

The holy dust is gather'd—with the prize
Away the priestess bounds—while, to the skies
In melody their mingled voices rise !
As o'er the beach she bounds along,
Now follow'd by the maiden throng :
They reach the shore—the stream is gliding at their
feet,
And louder now their voices swell, and rich and
sweet,
Bursting so purely forth, that ev'ry tone
Is echoed oft again round Allah's throne ;
For Peris catch the holy sounds,
As dying gently on the winds.
In wild and mirthful glee, now hand in hand,
Chasing the waves, they dance upon the strand ;
And now the dust is wafted on the wind,
And once again their fingers are entwin'd,
As louder still their voices rise
In joyful music to the skies !

While the charmed dust is floating on the air,
'T is thus they warble forth their holy prayer.*

Hail to the rosy dawn!
Hail to the Queen of morn!
Sweet mother of the day,
List to our roundelay!
Around thy altar tripping,
While dew each rose is sipping,
We fling our spells upon the air,
And bid thee listen to our prayer!

Ye snowy waves that sport,
Our feet, in frolic, court,
Oh! will ye deign to hear?
These anxious bosoms cheer?
If ever bark should glide,
Upon your shining tide,
That holds perchance a lover dear—
Oh! gently, gently, waft him here!

Ye wooing winds that stray,
And mid our ringlets play,
That hear our lovers sigh,
And waft his prayer on high,
That steal in fairy bowers,
Sweet fragrance from the flowers,
Then rage in storms upon the main,
Oh! waft our lovers back again!

* "Goëlands, Goëlands,
Rammenez nous nos amans!"
Old French Ballad.

On your bosom dust we fling !
And to you our lay we sing !
Then heed, and lend your wing,
Our lovers safe to bring !

V.

The wild shrill chaunt sinks deep and low,
And mingling with the murm'ring flow
Of rippling waves that round them play,
While on the air it dies away,
Still with prophetic sweetness floats—
For waves and winds prolong the notes ;
As if the elements had answer given
By that soft swell—the strain echoed in heaven !
That sound is past—another wakes—a tramp is
nigh—
Swift as the sea-bird's flight, a milk-white steed
darts by—
Swifter, a youth alights—the maidens start—and
why ?
A fleeting glance—a bound—and to his breast
The priestess of their spell is closely clasp'd !
Wild shouts of joy, delight, surprise,
From the astonished fair ones rise ;
But she—who to his beating heart was closely
press'd—
She—whom that one, quick glance, had singled
from the rest !
Grew as the lily pale—but swift again
Streamed o'er her brow the glow of maiden shame,
And mid the silky tresses of her hair
She quickly hid her lovely face ;

Where, spite of crimson blush yet deep'ning there,
A lurking gladness left its trace.
Now loudly rings the shout of joy,
That welcomes back their shepherd boy,
And from their heads the garland wreaths they
tear,
And wildly dance around the pair,
And fling the blossoms in the air,
While the song bursts from their hearts and lips
again,
As their nimble feet re-echo to the strain !

VI.

Who is the youth that clasps the maid,
And why are his looks so wildly glad ?
Is it Antonio once again
Returning to his native plain ?
Ximena in his arms ?—and can it be ?
Crimson'd with shame—nor struggling to be
free ?
What charm hath the soldier wrought ? or is 't
surprise
That, spell-bound, rivets on the ground her eyes,
Chaining her feet—that she no longer flies ?—
Yes, 't was Ximena's self—and is she changed,
Or is her heart as cold, and far estranged
From love, as it was wont to be—
Or melted by his constancy ?
Ximena ! o'er thy lovely head a year has flown ;
And oh ! what changes in one year may not be
known ?

Ye simple maidens best can tell, I ween,
Who 've pass'd the golden summer of sixteen !
The last spring's breath, that o'er her beauty stole,
had left

A deeper and a lovelier tint behind—nor rest
Upon its wing a single charm—just as the rose
Seems loveliest in the bud—but blooming, lovelier
grows !

Her eyes are more intensely blue,
More bright her lips vermilion hue,
Her voice is deeper, richer, grown,
Less wild---but sweeter in its tone !
And blushes too---before unknown,
Now mantle o'er her cheek,
And the heart's best language speak,
Her form has rounded in a fuller mould,
And as Antonio's eyes new charms behold,
In wonder to himself he asks---how she,
He thought so more than others fair, could be—
So changed, and yet e'en brighter than of yore—
For what of beauty did she lack before ?

VII.

Surprise, to native wildness, soon gave place ;
The spell was broke----she rush'd from his em-
brace---

Away, as wild as e'er, now lightly flew
And vanished, like a vision, from his view.
Was it a dream---or had he seen her there ?
Seen her !---ay, and more radiantly fair,
Than his fond heart had pictured her !---
Wrapt in these pleasing thoughts he stood,

Until the rustics, crowding round
With welcomes kind, awoke him from his trance ;
After meet parley—bade him join the dance ;
 “ This is our festal morn,” said they,
 “ And the steep rocks we climb to-day
 To seek the new born eaglet’s prey :
Thy limbs, Antonio, may not be as light,
But if once more thou ’lt join our upward flight,
There’s many a gentle lass since thou wert gone,
But budding then has now in beauty blown,
Whom thou mayst easy make thine own,”

“ But Ximena! the fairest of all! she cannot coldly
 be the same ?

She is meet to be a soldier’s bride—to share a sol-
dier’s fame— ”

“ Ximena!” with one accord the matrons said,

“ Ximena! such a phantom would you wed ?

She ’s e’en as cold as she was wont to be,

But lovelier in form you well may see :

Why none can woo her but the winds,

Meet love in them alone she finds.

We pray thee, ere the chase, Antonio, pause—

Thou wilt not risk thy life in such a cause ?”

“ I will,” the soldier firmly cried,

“ To-day, once more my fate is tried,

And if I lose her---then,

I wed my sword again ! ”

VIII.

He heard them say that she was cold—
Far different tale his heart had told.

Had he not seen the blushes on her cheek ?
And do not they the soul's true language speak ?---
Fair woman ! there is the tell-tale of thy heart,
Thy blushes, oft its secret throb impart ;
 The eyes may execution do,
 But, not like timid blushes, woo ;
The eyes, when bid, may speak the language of the
 soul,
The dawning blush---what mind hath power to con-
 trol ?
 The eye may drop in modesty,
 And only studied semblance be ;
 But can the cheek e'er crimson o'er
 Unless the heart has spoke before ?---
That veil young Modesty doth ever throw,
And bid it shade the conscious fair one's brow,
 Who feels her throbbing heart will beat
 With fond emotions, strange as sweet,
 Yet scarce can tell her passion's name,
 Or scarcely knows it is love's flame !

IX.

Now slowly the procession moves along ;
Of rosy children first, a cherub throng !
Who proudly bear their tiny baskets---made
Of bright sea-shells---with flow'rets of the glade,
The fairest, fill'd---and these, a rainbow shower in the
 air
They sportive fling, till all the ground appears one
 gay parterre ;
And next, moves hand in hand
The lovely maiden band !

Vested in simple, spotless white,
Emblem of hearts as pure and light ;
The village youths then follow in the train,
Whose mirthful glee resounds through all the
plain,
While many a fancied bridegroom in his pride,
Selects from 'mong the fair his destined bride ;
Last, comes an aged man, in part of guide,
Gay as the rest---for in that lovely vale, freed from the
strife
That steals away, so soon, the bloom of youth in bu-
sier life,
The hand of Time had lost its power---in sooth,
Threescore but seemed the green old age of
youth—

X.

They reach the mountain's base—bold heart that does
not quake with fear,
Viewing the wild and savage grandeur, whose high
empire here
Is held—to scale the cliff, or reach the eagle's nest,
Seems, to the stranger's eye, as folly's widest 'hest !
For, frightful chasms, ever and anon,
Break in the path, just as the goal is won :
From many a blooming cheek the rosy hue
Fades fast ; and many a frightened eye of blue
Is upward cast—while timid girls (who ne'er before
essay'd
The steepy path, so frightful to the view) shudder with
dread!

But Ximena's eye is bright—her cheek unblanch'd
with fear—

And her wild laugh gaily rings on high—joyous
e'er---

Her iv'ry arm with expectation raised---her eye,
Dancing with thousand sparks of light and ra-
diancy !

She waits---the breathing picture of delight—
For signal blast that bids their upward flight.

XI.

Now turns the aged mountaineer,
The hunter's horn peals on the air,
“ Away ! away ! away ! ”

And like the lightning's ray,
Up the mossy step from crag to crag they flew,
In paths not e'en the fearless wild goat knew!---
The boldest quickly reach the dizzy precipice's
height,

And turning, jeer at the companions of their flight,
Whose steps more timid, or less fleet,
Scarce dare to tempt the venturous steep---
But swift ere the youths can reach their side,*
Away o'er the rocks again they glide,
And toss their proud heads back with joy---till
caught,

And then, deliverance only can be bought

* Far be it from me to impeach the superiority of the *nobler sex* in any respect ; I would not therefore assert that they were less fleet than their fair companions ; but surely 't were but worthy of their *complimentary* spirits to believe that these latter had the advantage in starting first.

With that sweet promise, which for e'er
The fond and faithful heart holds dear ;—
But the more timid wooer, with more timid maid,
Lures the selected fair one to the cavern's shade,
And far apart from merry crowd
Their holy passion is avowed !
Mid nature's wilds is wooed, and won, the fair,
Who list'ning to the tale poured in her ear,
Hears echo's whispering voice repeat
The self-same tones, in accents sweet,
And starting, thinks it is her own fond heart,
That dared its cherish'd secret to impart.

XII.

'T is thus that each was wooed, and won,
Ere yet the chase was scarce begun !
But whither has the wild Ximena flown ?
Scarce from the horn the first shrill blast is blown,
When swift as the arrow wings its flight,
Swift as the day dreams of delight,
Away o'er the rocks she darts so light,
You 'd sworn she 'd challenged in the race,
(So fearless were her steps) the very wind,
And fled with such a winning grace,
The charmed element was left behind !
Now---gliding, like a phantom shape, from height to
height,
Now---skimming o'er rocks, as if the zephyrs bore
her weight !
Now seen---now lost, amid the pinnacles on high---
Bursting again upon the view---to the distant eye

She seems a tiny fairy, floating on the air,
Braving, in ev'ry step, dangers that round her stare,
As though some secret power had made them harm-
less there :

And now---her wild melodious laugh,
Melts faintly on the charmed ear---no more
The winds its murmured music waft ;
But fancy hears the sound e'en when 't is o'er ;
So deep the magic of those tones---so thrilling---that
when heard,
E'en to the inmost core, the heart is strangely, wildly
stirr'd ;

And when they cease---the syren sounds remain ;
For fancy dwells delighted o'er the strain,
And bids kind Memory wake the notes again !

XIII.

In vain the maddened youth pursued---still, still, she
fled,

As half with careless triumph---half in native dread---
Oh! for the golden apple that kind Venus gave,
The lover of the nimble-footed maid to save,
Whose luring colour stayed fair Atalanta's flight,
And lost the goal---which when the favour'd wooer
won,

With it---he gained a maid, whom none had yet out-
run.

Oh! where the Venus now to smile upon this wight !
But sure some guardian spirit watches o'er him,
For see---Ximena stops, short space before him---

* * * * *

An instant, closely to his panting breast,
Again, the maiden of his love is press'd!

But when upon her lips he would have sealed the
pledge---his due---

She turned those bright and dazzling eyes full on his
startled view :

And, though that flashing look

Not of proud anger spoke,

The youth releas'd his hold---and left her free---

For, who could meet unmoved Ximena's eye ?

There was a something which her glance inspired,

That spell-bound---even him, who yet admired ;

And never had Antonio seen it shine

With such a light---so fierce---yet so divine !

XIV.

They stood upon a lofty rock---beneath---

The white and floating clouds in misty wreath

Rolled gracefully!

The wide expanse around them lay,

Themselves half hidden in the sky!

Beside a crag which held the eagle's nest,

Where the young broodlings cradled and at rest,

Reposed, Ximena stood, fix'd, motionless !

Her hands were closely clasp'd, as in excess

Of overpowering hope---her eye

Fixed mutely on the clear blue sky :

Antonio gazed, with joy and pride,

Upon her beauty---yet he sighed---

" Ximena ! my loved ! " he softly said,

In a voice that seem'd half to upbraid,

Half of its reproachful tone afraid,

" Why dost thou bend that anxious eye

So strangely on the empty sky ?

There 's not a shadow flitting by---

Nay, rather turn away thy glance, sweet fair !
To these young eaglets calmly slumbering here ;
For then, perchance, a single ray, from those bright
eyes, might dart
And shed, unthinkingly, their long-lost sunshine o'er
my heart ;
And, though that light but for an instant beam on me,
Yet, were that instant worth whole years of ecstasy
O'er which another eye perchance might shine—
For oh ! what other could compare with thine ?
Behold these gentle birds, how softly sweet they
sleep,
For, o'er their rest, Affection doth her vigils keep ;
And sleeping as they are—each feels 't is not
alone—
And that another heart beats warmly near its own.
The soul of all—will seek a kindred soul,
O'er which to pour of bounteous love—the whole
That animates its breast ;
'T is God's—'t is Nature's 'hest—
In infancy—as with these birds—affection stirs
The heart—but older grown—alas ! he little errs,
Who calls the feeling love, and such as now
My lips, moved by my inmost heart, avow :
The Eagle, proudly soaring through the air,
Mid all his glory, hears his mate's shrill call,
And sinks into his nest---and feels, that there
Exists---more than his wide domain---his all
Of bliss---and when o'er earth night's curtains
fall,
And his dear ones around him creep,
How sweet must be the eagle's sleep !

The midnight wolf may howl the moon---
The storm may rage through his dread domain---

And he but nestles closer to his young---and feels,
That while with them, not all the tempest's fury
steals

One joy away---or makes one pleasure less,
Within his lone, but happy wilderness!
Then, shall there be one breast so cold, it cannot
know

The gentle feeling that endears each scene below?
Without that passion's flame, which, even here,
Where nature reigns, supremely grand---severe!
Softens the wilds---and bids young Love to make
his throne

Amid rude rocks?---Ximena! thou wilt not alone,
The holy power, that e'en these eagles own,
Still, with that cold, unconscious air, disown?"

XV.

Ximena heeds him not---her deep blue eyes
Are still intently fixed upon the skies---
" 'T is he! 't is he!" exultingly she cries.
" Behold, how proud he sails through the boundless
ocean of air!
And seems to feel the haven of his hopes anear.
All-powerful lord of the desert land!
Proud dweller of the lonely height!
Monarch of earth and air combined!
Whose wings touch heaven in their flight!
Welcome! thrice welcome to this cherished spot:
Oh! happier far than mortal man's---thy lot!"

Antonio marked her well, and thought the hour near
When he might freely plead his love---his hopes---
nor fear

That she would turn that flashing eye
Again in scorn---or laughing, fly !

“ Oh ! look, Ximena, how they flap their little wings,
And raise their heads, to catch the gift affection
brings,
They feel that he they love is near---and e'en yon
lordly bird,
Oh ! think with what a sweet emotion must his heart
be stirred ! ”

“ Stirr'd ! ay ! ” Ximena wildly cried,
“ Yes, stirred, but with high joy, a glorious delight,
A feeling of unbounded pride,
And the fierce consciousness of majesty and might !
Look---look--he is alone---alone, in the realms of
air !

The earth beneath his feet---and all its care---
Sole 'heritor of all that he surveys !
For who dare even meet his piercing gaze ? ”---
Deeply and heavily Antonio sighed---
But when his glance met hers---how could it chide ?
He knew the moment unpropitious to his suit--
But when, ye gentle maidens, could a lover wait ?

XVI.

He would have spoke---but Ximena, starting, cried,
“ Let us away !
The eagle comes ! 't were wildest folly longer to de-
lay !

•

Oh ! for an arrow and a bow,
To strike him but one well-aimed blow,
For honour's sake, before I go !
And yet "---she added in a softer tone---
" 'T would pain my heart to hear these dear ones
moan !
I would not hurt thee, bird---still, still, be free---
I can but envy thy proud liberty,
Not rob thee of 't---but come, let us away !"
Antonio moved not yet

" Ximena, stay !
I stir not hence till thou hast heard me speak---there 's
time for flight---
The eagle is afar---thy step, e'en as his wing, is light---
Oh ! hear me, or the swollen torrent in my breast
Will burst "---and he seized her hand---"be this the
balm to give me rest !"
And to his heart most fervently the wished-for pledge
was press'd.

" Speak on, speak on, my dying swain,
Lovers are made but to complain !"
Such was the taunting maid's reply,
While danced her laughter-loving eye,
Unmindful of his deep-drawn sigh !

"Alas ! Ximena ! what can be my theme
But love---my sleeping and my waking dream ?"

"Love !" and the music of her wild laugh rung
From rock, to rock, as 't were an echo-song :

“Oh! cease thy taunt---nay, maiden, mock not so,
Unless thou 'dst doom to deep, eternal wo,
Him who has loved thee ever---loves thee now---
Shall hope long-cherished melt like morning dew?
Shall life's gay youthful dream be chilled by you,
Whom nature made to bless?---with ev'ry charm
That can allure---endear and chain---disarm---
Nay, change that look of scorn, bid love remain;
At the sun-light of thy smile he lives again!

Still art thou cold? still chill

Me with that scornful smile?--

Then joy has left no glimmering spark for me:
'T is quenched---its latest flame is quenched by
thee---

Soon will the tomb thy fondest lover shade,
And thou wilt feel he died for thee, proud maid!

'Then shall the cypress o'er my grave,

As with the wind 't will darkly wave,

Mourn more than thou---who yet may save
Grow dim, ye stars that shone upon my birth!
Ye ne'er illumed my wayward path on earth!

Ye ne'er can cheer the gloom

Of my untimely tomb!

Not half so bright your radiance as Ximena's eyes,
Yet both alike shall shine when lost Antonio dies!

Ye flowers that circle round her brow,

Such icy bow'r how can ye know?

Go, deck his tomb who died at beauty's shrine!

Meet sacrifice for soul, proud maid, like thine!

It cannot be---nature, who made that faultless form,
Could ne'er forget a heart---which doth the most adorn
The loveliest breast---because with power to warm!

XVII.

“ Say, what was Eden’s loveliness ere woman smiled !
A barren waste alone---a dreary, empty wild !

Till woman’s fair love-lighted eye
Illumed the place with radiancy,
And threw a bright inspiring beam
To cheer the languor of the scene !

Each flower, that a moment since seemed dead,
Now raised, as though in joy, its drooping head,
Soon as it felt the light, the sylph-like tread
Of Eve---the wild-bird carroll’d forth its sweetest
note,

And gaily did the strains of joyful music float
Around---while man, the monarch lord of all---
Man smiled at love---and flew at woman’s call !
Thou art my bosom’s Eve---my guiding sun---
The beacon-star of hope, that leads me on---
Ere manhood’s down was on my cheek,
Love’s soft alluring voice had spoke
Within my heart---and my all ravished ear---
My soul---oh, how they drank the sounds so dear !
Ah ! why wert thou, like some beguiling angel, sent
Upon this earth, with all thy beauty’s blandishment !
To win each heart---to make each flower sweet
That heard thy voice---or felt thy fairy feet---
To make the very air you breathed glow warm,
As though enamoured of thy beauteous form !
Yet, not the lovely sheen of beauty’s cheek, alone,
Hath bound my heart, irrevocably, thine---thine own !
But oft a look within the blue depths of thine eye,
That starlit heaven ! spoke of love and constancy !---

And thence the charm was wrought :—
But all my dreams were nought—
They faded like the lightning's ray :
Pleasures too dearly bought—
That melt, like summer clouds, away ;
No more will fancy's fairy hand
Steal from each wound thou giv'st, its sting—
Fancy hath loosed the magic band,
And waved in flight her rainbow wing !—
And Hope, I know alone
But by her farewell smile ;
Oh ! once too dearly known,
To fade in mist the while !—
In vain I fled—within my breast
Thy image, still, a hallowed guest
Remained.—Upon the field of war I have been bold,
Have fought for glory's proud victorious wreath—
for gold—
Have won them both—to throw them at thy feet—
And in return—nought, but thy love, to meet !”

“ And wherefore is thy 'plaint ? thou 'rt come
again,
And find, I truer than the winds remain :
The spoils, so dearly bought,
I look on with delight :
Thou 'rt ever in my thought,
Whenever in my sight :
Thy form before me gleams,
Oft in my fearful dreams,
For as a *hound* I 've seen thee there,
While I appear'd the frightened *hare* :

Have I not fled again, and again,
 And you pursued—save now—in vain ?
 True, I have never fought for gold,
 To lay it at your feet ;
 But e'en with steps than yours more bold
 I've climb'd the rocky steep,
 And ere with laggard haste you fled,
 Have thrown the pheasants at your head !
 In what more can my constancy be proved ?
 I love you now—e'en as I ever loved—
 I love you—almost *half* as well
 As I love the morning dew,
 The flow'rets, and the shady dell,
 Or the clear sky so blue,
 The starry midnight hour, or rising sun,
 That looks so gloriously the earth upon ;
 But, as yon soaring, princely bird—
 Oh ! never, never, *half* so well !
 My bosom ne'er for thee can swell,
 As when I see the sky obscured
 By his dark wings, that, (like the black storm-
 cloud,)

Its bluey brightness for an instant shrud—
 See, where above our heads he's flown,
 Canst thou not reach him with a stone ? ”
 Then down the rock the heartless maiden sprang,
 While her shrill laugh, in gleeful music, rang
 From cliff to cliff again
 Like melting music's strain !—

XVIII.

When evening's sombre hues began to fall around,
 They saw Ximena seated on a rocky mound,

Still gazing rapturously upon the scene,
Of which she seemed the wild unearthly queen!
Antonio gently drew her from the lovely spot :

“ My fairest one ! amid these scenes time is forgot---
The day is spent, the sun is sinking fast,
Let us return while yet its light may last ;”
And now again they onward glide,
But calmly by each other’s side,
Till in their venturous path a mountain high,
Whose snow-capp’d summits mingled with the sky,
Rose in their sight---like some huge fortress wall,
The startled travellers’ courage to appal—
Upon one side, a rude arch met the eye,
As ’t were just hanging between earth and sky :
While fearful chasms, gaping ’neath,
Seemed opening their awful mouth,
As though to swallow those whose steps might dare
To tempt the frightful path, suspended thus in air :
Ximena in a desperate flight
Once, only once, had crossed this height ;
Save hers—not e’en the wild goat’s tread
Over yon fearful arch had sped :
And now—she dauntless dared the feat again,
Antonio’s words, remonstrances, were vain ;
“ Dearest !” let us return,” he said,
“ The way is long, but not so dread—
So fearful—dangerous—as this,
That overhangs yon dark abyss !
It seems as though, in fiendish sport,
Death, on yon arch, was keeping court ”——

Nought, nought, availed—she, laughing, gained the
shaggy point,
And, midway on the arch, bent o'er the dizzy depths
below,
While scarcely conscious of full many a bitter taunt
She flung at him.—With love's light step, Antonio
reach'd it too ;
And, side by side, they gazed upon the awful scene,
With more of fearless joy, than dread's disturbing
mien ;
For, that young glowing creature seem'd but
made
In such sublime magnificence to dwell !
Though fair—less formed to bask in sunny glade,
To sport like fading flow'r in shady dell,
Than breathe at liberty the wild, pure mountain air,
As wild and pure as all around—and, e'en, more
fair !

XIX.

The sky was yet as blue and clear,
Although more sultry now the air,
For not a breath played wooingly,
Among Ximena's tresses free ;
And reigned around an awful calm,
That half presaged some coming harm ;
And suddenly, a dark veil hid the western sky,
For o'er the sinking sun a heavy cloud pass'd by !
Antonio from his pleasing rev'ry woke,
That warning cloud the happy dream had broke !

“ Ximena ! come, we will away !
The arch is tott'ring with our stay,

The train await our coming—and this heavy warm
And breathless air, portends perhaps the coming
storm !”

Then o'er the arch he flew,
And reached the cliff below :---

XX.

Unmoved as e'er, Ximena's eye
Still sought the overclouding sky,
An instant---and a death-like pall
Its glowing brightness shrouded all !
Remained no spot, no streak of blue,
Unshaded by the funeral hue ;
The maid put forth her foot with airy bound ;
But wildly shrieking, drew it from the ground---
The vivid lightning flashed, with sudden glare,
Lit ev'ry rock ! and kindled all the air !
The marching thunder roared ! and startled echoes
howled again
That startling sound---as though it rent the rugged
breasts in twain
Of thousand moaning cliffs !
Peal rolled on peal ! flash followed flash !
While the crumbling rocks' unearthly crash,
As in the precipice, beneath, they dash,
Adds to the elements' terrific clash !
The storm-clouds burst---the winds awoke---
Swept o'er the earth with giant stroke,
And, joining nature's strife, loosed from their base
Rocks that for centuries had kept their place!--
Like bursting meteors on the firmament,
The lurid lightning glancing, dancing, went !

Fantastic ridges of the cliff, now fade in gloom,
Amid red glare---now burst upon the view---and
seem

The dread infernal genii of the place,
Peopling each mountain with a fiendish race !
As summoned by some voice of awful power
From the enchanted cave, where till this hour
They 'd slept---and striding through the horrid
gloom,
With fiery form---and hellish face---illumine
The Stygian darkness of the scene !

XXI.

And now some mightier momentary flash revealed,
What, to the lover's wearied eyes, seemed long concealed,

And he beheld Ximena's form,
Majestic, mid the raging storm !

She stood upon the dizzy precipice's very brink,
Beheld its black waves roll beneath---yet did not
shrink :

Her white arms were to heaven raised
In admiration---and she gazed

With enthusiastic fervour on the scene---too grand
For mortal eye---how then could she thus calmly
stand,

Unblenching---worshipping---'t was surely by some fairy's wand !

Her long and cloud-like hair enwreathed her form,
And floating wildly on the loosened storm,
As the lightning's flash illumed
Each golden tress---it seemed

A ray of heavenly light,
Just sent to chase the night :
With fear Antonio on her lofty beauty gazed—
A superstitious dread crept through his veins,
Fancy the creature of another world had raised,
And Reality's chill form fancy now claims !
Scarce had the wild, the maddening thought, glanced
o'er his troubled brain,
When with a crash, that seemed as though the skies
echoed again,
His fears—as if high heaven hurl'd
Dire vengeance from its hidden throne—
That to a creature of this world
Its brightest spirit should be known—
With one, long, loud, appalling sound,
The crumbling, tott'ring arch gave way !
Gigantic ruins roll'd around,
Beneath the lurid lightning's play !
“ Ximena ! Ximena ! ” burst wildly from the lover's
lips,
And “ Ximena ! Ximena ! ” each answering rock
wildly repeats,
As though the hollow sound they now returned,
In mockery of the hopeless grief that burned
Within his breast—
“ Lost ! Gone ! indeed, forever, now !
Oh ! Fate, too blind to see or hear our mortal wo,
That crushed Ximena's form---nor killed Antonio
too---
I have been saved, though thousand ruins round me
lay ;
And yet, alas ! ” he stopped---a momentary ray

The broken arch disclos'd—one narrow ridge was left,
Just hanging in the air—but all the rest was reft ;

“ Oh ! can she still be there ? ”—the light has
gone—

And with it, hope's far brighter light is flown :

Vain thought, to dream 'mid nature's strife,

And rending rocks—she still had life !

XXII.

If my rude lines perchance should meet a lover's
eye,

One who hath felt that never-dying flame—but not
As the world's gay, restless vot'ries feel—

One, whose warm passion never, never, is forgot,
Whose heart, not e'en despair can steel,—

Let him defend me from the incredulity

Of those, who coldly do deny

That e'en with death love ne'er can die !

Antonio felt it so—along the height

He climbed—although it trembled 'neath his
weight,

It seemed as though Ximena's spirit led his steps—
and he—

When life was perilled most—flew on, most fearless,
dauntlessly !

A moment more—the crumbling stones gave
way—

With bruises sore, in blood all drench'd he lay,
Deprived of sense—that nobler part was gone, the
earth-born clay

Remained—but oh ! when reason dawn'd, despair's
all-clouding ray

Came with it—for his tott'ring feet refused to bear his
weight,
Though still he knew not of the young, the loved
Ximena's fate !

XXIII.

Hushed was the thunder's awful sound,
But the storm still fiercely raged around ;
The gates of heaven seemed wide opened o'er his
head ;
“ And is their fury thus,” he thought, “ loosed o'er
the dead ?”
'T was almost dark---but had Ximena still been
there !
Her snow-white garments floating noiseless on the
air,
His eye had pierced the deepest gloom—e'en that
which reigns below—
To feel she lived—and was she dead ? his heart re-
sponded, “ No !”
And now, with energy renewed, he shouts her name,
Alas ! e'en to his fancy's ear, what answer came ?
The oft—the wildly long-repeated sound, but harshly
broke
Upon the watery atmosphere—not even echo spoke !
And if the maiden lived---unsheltered from the pierc-
ing storm—
The winds, and beating rain, dashing around her
slender form—
And thinly clad—could she e'er see the morn ?
Oh ! what must be her fate, who with buoyant life,
so late

Revel'd in beauty's pride—Alas ! in one, short
hour,
What fearful changes o'er the soul of man may
low'r !
One moment—and he sports in joy's gay, rosy
bow'r,
The next—an arrow wing'd from the strong bow of
care,
Will make his heart a Tartarus of black despair !

XXIV.

Thus thought Antonio, but till morning's light
Returned to chase away the double night,
He could but weep—and watch—and mourn—
And weeping, watching, wish 't were dawn :
Then to a hollow cave he groped his way,
Until Aurora's smile should hail the day.
The winds die moaningly away,
As though they wail'd above some lifeless form,
Whose spirit wing'd its flight amid the storm !
As each new gust, with sudden swell, breaks on his
ear,
Antonio starts, and looks around, as half in fear,
And thinks the melancholy sound, Ximena's funeral
chaunt,
The night, her pall—the rocks, the only grave that she
can vaunt,
The mourner's tears, the flooding-rain,
All shed for her, alas ! in vain !
At length he sunk upon the ground,
And his weary soul short refuge found,
Spite of himself, in sleep—
Untranquil as 't was deep—

The senses may be lull'd to rest,
But care, wakes in the tortured breast ;
And dreams stole sadly o'er his mind,
Where, truth, and fancy were combined ;
The ivory gates are opened wide,
And forth the vision'd people stride ;
Yet, not arrayed in rainbow hue,
Beaming with treasures ever new ;
But in dread horrors, wildly dress'd,
And wo in every face express'd ;
And now, in misty brightness, o'er his mind
Arose the form of one, deepest enshrined
Within his heart—again upon the dizzy height,
The loved Ximena stood before his anxious sight ;
Her long light hair floating unbound,
Hung like a golden mantle round,
While from the broken ridge, by danger unappall'd,
In birdlike tones, sweeter than e'er—she gaily call'd
Her lover to her side—but ah ! the tott'ring height
Threat'ning destruction—trembles 'neath her fairy
weight !

More unsubstantial her white robe is grown,
Than fleecy clouds that moonlit skies adorn !—
A death-like dew breaks coldly o'er his throbbing
brow,

He sees—he feels—the angel being is not now,
Oh ! vain imagining ! a denizen of earth,
But holy seraph, that from heaven drew its birth ;
He starts—awakes—and trembling—fearful—gazes
round ;

The storm hath wept itself to rest—and ev'ry sound

Is hushed—the winds' hoarse notes no longer
now

Sweep rudely o'er the mountain's desert brow;
No longer rings the loud, unearthly crash
Of tumbling cliffs that from the precipice dash!
But rocks bathed in the moonbeam's ray,
In shattered heaps around him lay.

XXV.

Slowly he rose, with fevered brain—high on the spang-
led vault above,

The pale cold moon shone pure and bright, as virgin
dreams of love,

And gloriously calm, as woman's eye,
Ere a tear has dimmed its hallowed radiancy!

The fortress rock, now (lighted with its beams)

Like ramparts painted on the heavens, gleams

In all its desert grandeur, lofty, vast and high—

Like war-tower of a giant world—which mortal eye,

Save with a shudd'ring dread, may never see!

With bitter heart Antonio turned from that fair scene
away—

“My loved! my lost Ximena! if thy hov'ring spirit
stray

Around thy lover's form—if still thy ears have power
to hear

His heart-wrung moan—oh! guide him to the path,
thou ever dear!

Where thy blanch'd corpse is hid—'t is something
left of thee!

And still is dear—dearer than life, or joy, to me!

Alas ! wretch that I am, what do I say ?
Would that on earth my loved Ximena lay,
And each rude rock, and shaggy peak, that closely
 hems me round,
Should taste the blood of these, my wandering feet,
 till thou wert found ;
But no ! perchance she sleeps in yon dark gulf---Oh !
 heaven shield
Me from that thought—and 'gainst the rest my heart
 is steel'd ! ”

XXVI.

Mournful he spoke, and raised his streaming eyes,
Beseechingly, to the illumined skies—
Why starts he back with that wild look ?—where did
 that vision rise ?
Far on the distant rock, a sylph-like form,
 (Such as ne'er yet with mortal life was warm)
Is skimming o'er the rude rocks that around her lay,
So light, save wanting wings, 't is sure some syren
 fay ;
Her soft luxuriant hair floats wildly round
So long, its golden mazes sweep the ground,
And not a tinge of blood in that young cheek
Sheds now the rosy glow, whose blushes speak
Of buoyant life, dwelling within—who can it be ?
Antonio's conscious bosom asks but once—'t is she !
The creature of his dream—and dreams he yet ?
Why, if he does, 't is bliss—for, to forget,
In sleep, the woes that rack our waking—and to feel
The loved, the lost one's cherish'd image gently
 steal

Upon the mind—arising from the tomb—what sweeter
balm
Can bounteous nature give, than thus with soothing
hand to charm
Each “earth-born care” to rest, and wake new joy,
when most
The weary spirit feels hope’s lovely smile is lost?
’T is Fancy’s luring wing, that works the spell,
Ye, who have suffer’d hopelessly, can tell,
How soothingly, how well!—

XXVII.

The form glides lightly on—reaches the broken height
—her foot
Upon the crumbling stones is placed—a long, wild,
warning shout
Bursts from the agonized youth below—“Stay!
stay!”
He shrieked—“the ruined arch is broken half away,
’T is death to tempt the frightful steep,
A step will hurl thee in the deep!
Oh! stay Ximena—peril not thy life,
Hast thou forgot the tempest’s awful strife?”
The hollow blast alone, in answer moan’d around,
As ’t were to warn him, she was heedless of the
sound.
Majestic moves the dauntless maiden on—less fleet
The wild fawn’s step than her calm gliding now---
Nor stops---nor heeds the crumbling stones beneath
her feet,
That, roaring, rush into the abyss below!

In broken accents, that bespoke his soul was wrung
With feelings that defied, oh ! far ! the power of
tongue,

Antonio shrieks, and shouts again,

And shouts, and shrieks, alas ! in vain !

At length the ruined part 'twixt her and the huge
rock,

She but a fleeting moment since had pass'd, gave
way,

With crash loud as the bursting of artillery !—

As paralyzed—appall'd—by that tremendous shock,

The shape paused on the broken height—

And, then—swam on with step so light,

That loosen'd stones, which every instant fell, seemed
moved,

Not by the chissel'd fairy foot that o'er them roved,

But some unknown mysterious blast,

Rending the rocks where'er she pass'd,

Lest mortal step (whom broken arches could not
stay,)

In evil hour, should wend along that venturous way,

And tread the hallowed path,

Her footsteps pressed on earth !—

XXVIII.

She gains the rock—Antonio darts

To clasp her in his arms—but starts—

Recoils—those starry eyes are gleaming widely
there,

Directing not her dangerous course—but fix'd on
air !

The curdling blood within her lover's veins
Suspends its flow—as still unmoved she gains
His side ;—but stops not—speaks not—passes
by—

Nor moves her eyes, still fixed on vacancy !

That shape—those eyes—and are they not Xime-
na's own ?

Why stands her once fond lover thus as changed to
stone ?

Yes, 't was Ximena's face—Ximena's form—but fled
The spirit—and it seemed a shadow from the dead,
And, passing, chill'd the very air---

Her rounded arms, long, stiff, and bare,
And whiter than the snow, hung by her side---as
made

To beauty's model true---by the cunning sculptor's
aid,

Her eyes moved not when he withdrew,
For they appear'd to have pierced *through*
His form---and gazed afar, as led
By some all-guiding star, that shed

Upon the noiseless phantom's path its guardian
light---

And now, a cliff hath hid her from his anxious sight,
Crush'd---agonized---amazed---with stupid eye,

He saw the loved one's spirit passing by,
And when 't was vanished---started from his death-
like trance,

And wildly cast around, above, below, his glance ;
The moon shone in the sky, serene,
And calm---the waves reflect its beam ;

The boundless rocks majestic stood before his sight,
And his dizzy eye beheld the arch's broken height:
It was no dream—he was awake—in the wild storm
Ximena died—he shrank from her spirit's form.—

XXIX.

And now his dead Ximena seeks the church-yard's
gloom—
That consecrated spot—whose dismal vaults entomb
The guardians of her infancy!—they cannot claim
That dearest, fondest epithet, a parent's name!
For, them, she ne'er had known—from childhood's
hour rear'd
By the mountaineer, who e'en in death was still re-
vered.
Again the form is seen—"Ximena!" in despair he
cries,
The shape still with its measured step glides on—nor
yet replies—
"Ximena! Ximena!" but in vain—
She turns not—answers not again—
Now, frantic with his fears, he rushes past the maid—
then turns,
And, while despair, and hope, and love, with mingled
fury burns
Within his breast—opes wide his arms—nor to the
right or left
She swerves—those eyes still fix'd, as though of rea-
son's light bereft,
Onward it glides—nearer—nearer—a moment
more—

Oh ! heaven ! how boundless is thy, near exhausted,
store

Of bliss !—the frozen form is clasped, close, to his
breast !

The clay-cold mouth to his burning lips is press'd--

The fluttering heart still feebly beat—

The breath of life was in the icy mouth—

Oh ! joy ! beyond description sweet !

Why is 't, alas ! thou art not shared by both ?

Ximena lies within his arms,

His breath the chilled Ximena warms,

And nature still dominion kept---

The loved one lived---she breathed---she slept!

Oh ! thou unknown, but, soothing power

That rules our sense at midnight hour !

'T was thou, alone, that wrought this miracle, and
brought

Ximena back---led by thy unseen hand,

Guarded from fear, or danger, by thy wand,

She hath trod the rugged mountain's steep,

When loosened stones beneath her feet

Crumbled, and broke, at every step---*they* fell,

But *she* survived---bound by thy blissful spell !

XXX.

Then gently as the youthful mother's arm,

In fondness, shields her first-born babe from
harm,

He raised her from the ground---and drew his man-
tle round

Her tender form---all heedless of the cutting wind,
Whose keen blast froze the blood---but left unchill'd
the mind :

And as he held her motionless upon his breast,
A thousand times, to her cold, pallid cheek, were
press'd

Those burning lips---as though their thrilling glow,
so rife

With all earth's sweetest joys---could warm her
back to life :

The winds breathed softly o'er her cheek,
Life's rosy current 'gan to streak
Its lily hue with tints of red,
Light as the dawning colour shed
O'er the moss-veiled rose's lovely bed ;
And oh ! how'did his heart rejoice,
When first the music of her voice
Broke in soft murmurs on his ear,
Breathing his name---as though 't were dear !

Oh ! not the bright archangel's melody, whose
tone,

Was sweetest of the cherub choir round Allah's
throne ;

Whose heaven-born strains, alone, had power to
lull to peace

The tortured souls---make e'en the charmed fiends
cease

Their torments*---half so full of music came,
As to his ears that once repeated name !

* See Bulwer's beautiful tale of the Soul in Purgatory.

Pilgrims of the Rhine.

But, when the day-break of those radiant eyes,
 burst on his view,
Blazing with all their wonted lustre, e'en more
 deeply blue
Than ere, though consciousness now glimmer'd in
 their light,
He closed his own—how could they meet that daz-
 zling sight ?
She woke, and wildly round her stared—she breathed
 his name,
Unconscious that he heard—for recollection came
Not yet—she knew not that her head upon his breast
 was held,
Till, with the soothing tone that love inspires, he
 gently quell'd
Her fears—while—softly, as the genial breath of
 early spring,
Brings to the bursting flowers new life, new beauties
 on its wing—
His fond endearments brought the mantling crimson
 to her brow,
And thousand varied beauties brightly dawning 'mid its
 glow.
It were unmeet for simple bard to tell
The mystic words, whose magic wrought the
 spell ;
The hallowed tones of love, deep in the heart
May lie—but never from that shrine depart :
They can be felt—be heard—but never told
 again---
E'en to the poet's art—Herculean task, and vain !

XXXI.

She listened to his tale—her unresisting hand—that
pledge

Of love grew warm in his—he led her to the precipice's edge—

But when the ruin'd, broken arch met her astonished
view,

And she beheld the shatter'd segments 'twixt th'
abyss and blue

Ethereal sky---just hanging in the air—she press'd
Convulsively her lover's hand, and in his breast
Hid her pale face—Destruction's reign not yet was
o'er ;

While, still they stood beside the scene—with a
loud roar--

Like thunder from on high—the broken column fell !
That moment's startling, thrilling horror, who can
tell ?

And she, whose wild laugh did so late resound
Like joyous music, echoed round,

Now, terror-struck, sank on the ground!--
Oh, love! how great is thy mysterious power,
Whose spell is wrought in one, short, fleeting
hour ;

The dauntless maid, that climb'd the mountain's
brow,

Nor seem'd the very name of fear to know,
Touched by thy never-erring shaft---swift grew---
Timid and soft, as frightened mountain deer,
That starts and trembles at a footstep near.

Thy quiver's finest darts have pierc'd a heart, once
steel'd

'Gainst all thy arts---who, when above the thunder
peal'd---

Worshipped ! and gloried in the storm,
That rag'd around her slender form.

'T is thou, that giv'st to woman's charms
The soft'ning ray, that wins, disarms ;

We look with awful pleasure on the eagle's flight,
But listen, raptured, to the tuneful bird of night,
Whose warbling gently steals the sense away,
Not awes it with his lofty potency !

At sparkling wit's gay, dazzling shrine,
Thousands may bow the knee,
But, while they own the *charm*, divine,
Detest its Deity !

The maid, whom love has mark'd his own,
Not in the world's bright glare is won ;
When truly touch'd—she shrinks, with blushes on
her cheeks,

From praises, that the hollow voice of flatt'ry
speaks ;---

Love is the lowly violet, that blooms
Upon a shrouded bed ;

On all the air around sheds sweet perfumes,
While, hid in friendly shade ;

But, tear the veiling leaves away,
It dies beneath the glare of day !

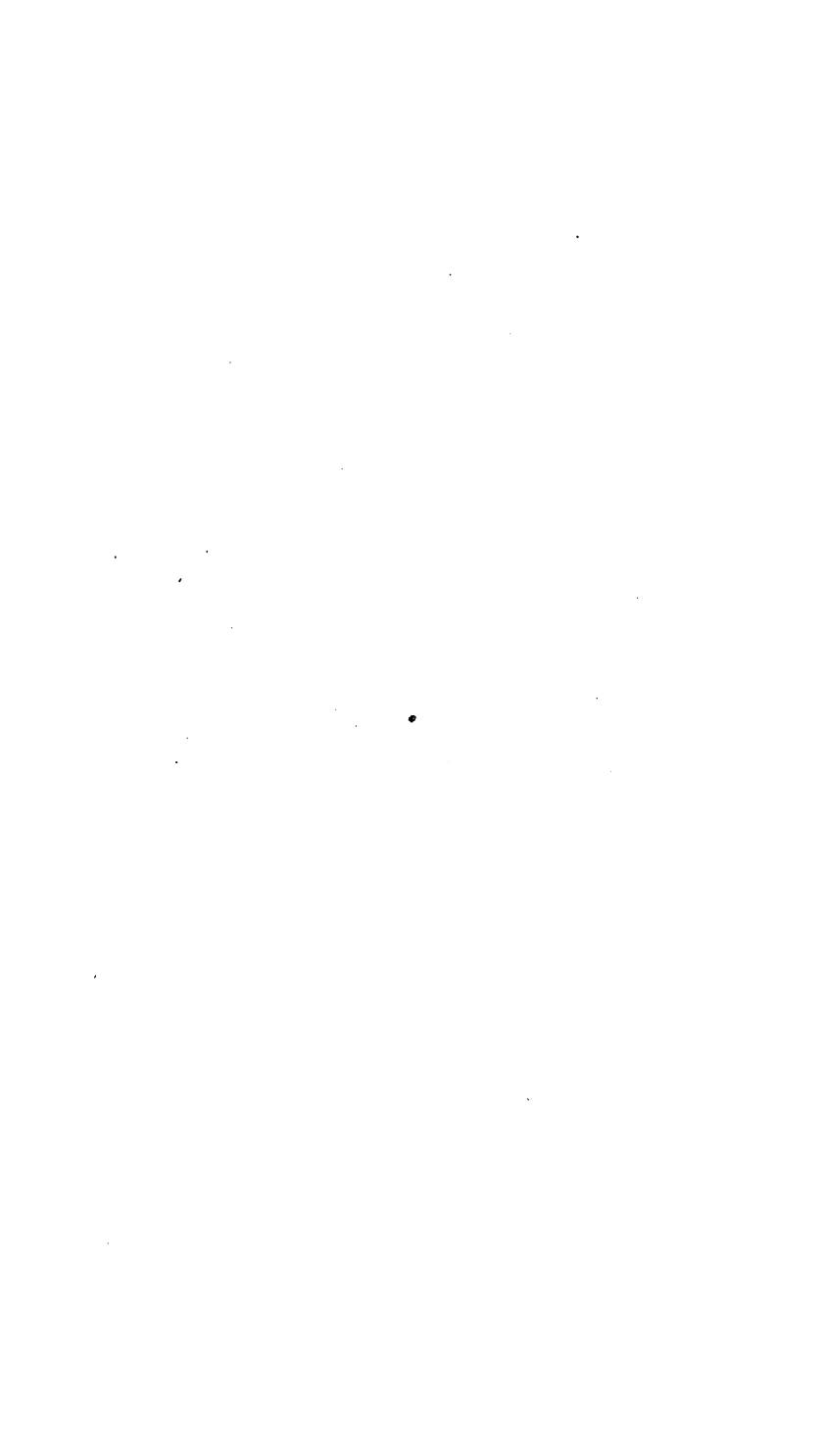
XXXII.

'T is morn ! upon the green,
The maids again are seen ;

Again, around their lovely priestess dance,
And, with full many a sportive, meaning glance,
Their flow'rets fling, and hail her, bride,
And call Antonio to her side :
But in Ximena's tone and eye a change
Is seen—more beautiful—and yet how strange !
Those radiant eyes less dazzling bright
Now shine—but with more heavenly light—
Her voice rings not so wild, and high,
But sweeter in its melody !
And a white veil is o'er her blushes thrown ;
Blushes, more deep than e'er that cheek has
known :
While, smiles of gentleness adorn
The lip where once the curl of scorn
Sat proudly throned !——
And now the circling maidens whisper low,
As in their laughing eyes fond wonders glow—
“ What magic secret has the rocky mountain taught ?
Thou art more fair, Ximena, than we ever thought ;
Now, prythee, wilt not tell the charm,
That can so many hearts disarm !”
Grew deeper on her cheek the crimson glow,
She felt Antonio's glance was on her now,
And as those bright eyes snowy lid
Their chasten'd lustre quickly hid,
She whisper'd in a soft and thrilling tone
“ It is not good for woman to be alone !”*

* See Genesis, 2d chapter, 16th verse.

END OF CANTO FIFTH.



P E L A Y O :

OR,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.



CANTO SIXTH.



PELAYO:

or,

THE CAVERN OF COVADONGA.

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

One noble pulse—noblest and best!
Hath sway within the patriot's breast,
Which, spite of slavery, can never be suppress'd!
Who that hath known the ever hallowed name
Of Freedom, yet—hath felt a country's shame—
Would yield—e'en when the strife were vain—
And crouch before the victor's throne,
As though that sound had ne'er been known?
Not thy brave children, Spain!
They could not tamely bow the knee
Before a conqu'ror's tyranny,
Till gold had chained their soaring spirit's liberty,
And Plutus paved the way for wanton Luxury!
She comes—and her gemm'd goblet, flowing o'er
with sweets—ah! flee,
And taste them not—they bring destruction, death,
despair to thee,
Proud Spain! Alas! why wilt thou drink the potent
spell?—
'T is done! thou hast drunk—and the rest is past—
you fell?—

And wilt thou ever listen to her wile ?
 E'er live within the sunshine of her smile,
 That fascinates—and murders, even while
 It most allures ?—Ill-fated land ! and must it be,
 That you still quaff the draught of luxury ?
 Still idly sleep in shameful slavery !
 “ Hereditary bondsmen ! know ye not,
 Who would be free, themselves must strike the
 blow ? ”
 Were still this noble motto unforget,
 Ye had not fallen—low—debased—as now !

II.

Alas ! with brave Riego, e'en the name
 Of Glory died ! the poet's lyre is waked in vain !
 It cannot bring thy long-lost spirit back again—
 The song of liberty is o'er,
 And I may tune thy praise no more ;
 Strike but one note, to wake Pelayo from the tomb—
 then flee—
 Muse of the past !—hang mute, my harp, upon the
 willow tree !
 The silver strings still vibrate—though---I know not
 why---
 List ! 't is a harsher sound, and void of melody !
 As though---untouch'd---the jarring chords would
 mourn
 Riego's spirit is forever gone !
 And ask, “ who did this wrong ? ” ay, e'en his bloody
 ghost cries, “ who ? ”
 (Is there no tongue that will assert his wrongs ?
 No minstrel lyre to whom revenge belongs ?

Or crouch they too---the noble, free,
 Before your bloody tyranny ?)
 What voice shall dare declare, ye Holy Powers,* that
 't is *you* ?

You---who in mock'ry of the Deity,
 The church's holy Godhead, formed of three,
 Do call your alliance *holy*---ay !
 Then murder must be sacred duty too,
 And we may all prepare to die !
 For *Freedom's* punishment is *Death* with you !
 And to all unchain'd souls your *Holinesses* would
 decree,
 (As Caligula† wished of old) that our spirits all should
 flee

With one fell blow !---in sooth, a *goodly company* !
 But would you deign to hear your names (true ones)
 from *me*---

They 'd (bluntly speaking) Mammon, Rapine, Fol-
 ly, be !

Mammon ! who rules with riches and nobility !
 Rapine—a savage god, with bloody hands and
 crimson brow,

(Murder for herald)—while a blushing purple flow,
 Warm, from a thousand hearts WHO DARE BE
 FREE,

Behind her huge footsteps, streams constantly !
 And next—unthinking Folly, with her cap and bell,
 Is following in the train---but why—say who can
 tell ?—

* England, Russia, and France.

† This proud, wanton and cruel tyrant is said to have wished that the Romans had but one head, that he might strike it off at a blow. This saying is often related of Nero, but Lempriere attributes it to Caligula.

Not she herself—then how can I ?—
Enough! away! ye visions fly !
Like Macbeth's witches fade in air !
With such black souls 't were ill to fare :
I'd rather ask with Banquo, " whither have they
vanish'd ? "
And thank my kindly stars that have such demons
banish'd.

III.

My dream of tyranny is fled !
Bondage and chains melt from my view ;
Thoughts of the old world all are sped,
And rise bright visions of the new !
The banner of freedom, " the star-spangled banner "
waves o'er the plain !
My own loved land ! land of the free !
Oh ! how I welcome dreams of thee,
Welcome the holy smile of liberty, again !——
America ! bright clime ! were but thy infant arm more
strong,
Thy brethren of the elder world had never wrought
this wrong,
And Poland had been call'd to life again,
And Liberty ne'er found a tomb in Spain !
The Holy Alliance soon would shrink before that
mighty arm,
Maturer grown !—Despotic sway, well might it then
disarm.—
But, I am straying widely from my theme ;
Oh ! who would not dally in such happy dream ?

These blessed shores!—my own loved country!
 home!
 At the magic of those words who would not roam?
 Away! away! I must resume the rein,
 Return my gentle Muse to earth again,
 Thou art not worthy now---to soar so high,
 Thy wings are still unfledged—they cannot fly—
 But shouldst thou ever, nobler, perhaps, *tamer*, be—
 My father-land, shall lack no minstrel lyre in thee;
 Let first those notes so feeble yet, grow strong,
 Then wake, for this dear clime, thy sweetest song;
 My story waits---Nay, prythee, thou wilt not forsake
 me now?
 Stoop then thy airy flight---for, Isabel awaits below.

IV.

Oft hast thou dawn'd, fair beaming Sun,
 A thousand wailing hearts upon—
 But ne'er to lighten o'er such scene of heartfelt wo
 As that which gives the Christian princess to her foe!
 The streets are filled—the Goths are hurrying to
 and fro,
 Sorrow and rage in ev'ry face express'd,
 Struggling with kindlier feelings in the breast:
 The veil was torn---all knew the princess' fate,
 And cursed the one---they strove in vain to hate!
 With her---their hopes of liberty had vanished!
 Their dreams of happiness---she, all had banished!
 Each face was filled with gloom,
 Each darkened heart echoed despair,
 And found too empty room,
 For ev'ry hateful feeling there!---

They felt the downfall of their state---and saw
 Hope perish, all her bright dominion o'er !
 The fatal hour draws near, but where is he,
 Who should avenge his sister's infamy ?---
 What must have been the warrior's fate
 That he is thus in vengeance late ?
 Sleeps he perchance on the battle plain,
 Mangled, unknown, among the slain ?
 Or is he fled ?---Avaunt ! abasing thought, away !
 Shame not the warrior's spotless glory with thy stay,
 Has the Eagle ceased to soar ?---is Honour dead ?
 'T were better both, than brave Pelayo fled !---

V.

But who is he, beneath yon arch's shade,
 Who stands, tall, motionless, and proudly sad,
 Leaning in gloomy thought ?---a statue sent
 To grace that cold and trophied monument,
 Which marks the glory of a hero dead !
 His arms are folded sternly on his breast,
 The sable plumes that wave above his crest,
 Half shade his death-like face---while others mourn
 and weep,
 Does his far greater sorrow, mutely, coldly sleep ?---
 Oh, no ! beneath that sternness you may trace,
 The agony he seeks to hide---not chase---
 While others curse their princess' name,
 His lips not e'en bewail her shame :
 The torrent in his breast is far too deep for words,
 True grief, knows not how sweet relief the tongue
 affords :
 It wrings the soul---it gnaws the heart---
 But hath no power to impart

The cavern'd depths which hide its smart :
Alonzo ! yes, thy last sad hope is flown,
Well mayst thou stand thus spiritless, alone,
Scarce conscious that the hour is come,
Which must forever seal thy doom :

V.

But see ! who strides majestically along,
(While part at his approach the awe-struck throng)
With shrouding cloak---and visor down---
Of lordly mien, although unknown ;
And hark ! a deep voice speaks Alonzo's name ;
He starts from his long trance, the flush of shame
Streams o'er his brow---

“ Fie, on thee now,”
The warlike form harshly exclaims ;
“ Why sleep you, sluggard ! in your chains ?
Is *this* the hour for idle thought ?
Has grief such cowardly feeling brought ?
His spirit must, indeed, be callous, cold,
And dead to liberty, or love,
Who can---thus tamely yielding---can behold
His bride---the warrior's sister---prove
Inconstant to her vow---Away ! this is the hour
For *action*, not for slothful thought,
Yon sun must never sink till we declare our power,
And liberty, or death be bought !
Blood, blood, must flow---not tears---we meet,
to-day,
A noble grave---or nobler victory !”

“Stranger ! thy words—thy noble feelings—both,
Alike, bespeak thee, warrior, and Goth !”

“Thou ’st read me true—I ~~am~~ a Goth—proud of
the name,
E’en in these days of degradation, ay ! and shame !”--.

The helmet quickly was untied,
The shrouding cloak all flung aside,

“Away with thee !—look on me well—I wot,
My brave Alonzo has not yet forgot”——
“Pelayo !” shriek’d the youth--“my brother--
friend--alive !

Oh ! God ! thou yet hadst one—one bounteous joy
to give !—

It is no dream—no fancy of my fever’d brain—
It is thyself--the same Pelayo, once again
Returned.”——Wildly he clasp’d the warrior’s form--
while from his eyes

Gush’d fast, in mingled flow the tears of pleasure,
grief, surprise :

Such tears—although a soft’ning feeling they impart,
Disgrace not yet the throbbings of a manly heart :
For, oft the strongest hand amid the fray
Bears softest heart, ’neath feelings gentler sway !

VI.

But tears, Pelayo, were not made for thee,
Thy warlike soul knows not the luxury
Of grief—by soothing tears express’d--
Far fiercer passions move thy breast.—
Though heaved his lab’ring chest,

Like mighty waves, that seek the skies,
 As though 't would burst at every rise,
 Still, stern his brow, in awful majesty !
 His bearing high---his soul-inspiring eye---
 The lofty mind which spoke in ev'ry look---
 The haughty pride that could not insult brook---
 The noble front---where Sol had left his trace,
 To add another, and more manly grace---
 His scornful lip---and glance of fire---
 A lip ne'er blanch'd with fear---and glance that
 could inspire
 Whole myriads, when, on the field, in vengeful ire
 It shone---all were unmoved ! though who can tell
 The struggling thoughts beneath that bosom's
 swell !

VII.

Lock'd in each other's arms, short space, they nei-
 ther spoke ;
 At length, Pelayo's clear deep voice the silence
 broke :
 " Not this the hour for grief---
 Our meeting must be brief---
 No more ! with these too womanish tears away,
 And nerve thy heart---thy *arm* needs strength
 to-day !
 The hour of our worst dishonour now is near,
 And with it *vengeance* comes---these dastard Moors
 most dear
 Shall pay my sister's shame"---His choking voice re-
 fused to speak---

Great must the struggle be, which makes such dauntless warrior weak !

And then thou know'st," Alonzo cried, " that she "——

" Yes, yes," exclaimed Pelayo bitterly,

" I know, my sister is unworthy of the name---

Hath brought upon her race dishonour's foulest stain !

And made a heartless *mockery* of the holiest tie ;

Curse, on her shameless soul, her damning infamy !

And *double* curses, on the traitor's head,

Who, from bright virtue's thornless path, hath led

Her steps---but no ! hers is the greatest blame,

Be hers the greatest punishment and shame !"

" Nay, curse her not---she ne'er before hath swerved---

Thou dost not know what pangs may have unnerved

Her soul"

" Heavens ! what words are these ?

What foul debasing witcheries

Hath work'd this ill---and sunk a high-born Goth
Into the weakness of a lover's sloth !

Who sees dishonour's signet set

On Ormesinda's name---and yet

Dares seek to shield the blasted maiden, and assuage
The hot-breath'd fury of my just, indignant rage !

Who sees her break---renounce---her plighted
vow,

And to a foe---a heathen---yield her hand---

Yet tamely bows, like *coward*, 'neath the blow,
Nor feels that *his* should be th' avenging brand !
Accursed, the puny passion's hold,
That, thus, transforms the brave and bold,
Whose poisoned breath hath power to blight
The valour of a Christian knight !"

"Pelayo, hold ! for whither does thy ill-timed fury
tend ?

I must not list to this, even from one I *once* called—
friend !

Though sufferings waste—though tortures rack—
this frame,

My *mind* is still as e'er---proudly the same !

My *heart* is broke---my *courage* whole---

As firm, as dauntless still, my soul !

And, hatred to our foes

Each hour fiercer grows ;

Speak---and command ! thy words will not prove
vain---

Thou 'lt find me, to the last, true friend of Spain!"

VIII.

"List ye, then---Vengeance hath only *slept*---she 'll
wake again---

And arm'd with double power !

Mark well my words---we wash in blood, alone, our
shame---

She wakes---this very hour !

A valiant host of Goths, at my command,

In Covadonga wait, with ready brand :

My presence here is known to none,
Nor must be---till the deed is done !---
To-day, a thousand Moors shall lick the sod !
To-day, a thousand souls must face their God !
Our new-born empire's hallow'd seat
Is Covadonga's safe retreat,
From thence, unsparing---ceaseless---war we
wage,
And cool in gore---in *Moorish* gore---our rage !
This is not all---I have a purpose yet more deep,
That well might make thine eyes---ay, e'en thy
heart to weep
With very blood !"---He raised his haughty brow,
"Nay, falter not---nor blench---my plighted vow
Is register'd---unchanged---unchangeably---in hea-
ven!
My purpose, dark, and desperate---cannot be riven !"
"Fear not---my arm is ever at my country's need---
My courage firm as Scylla's rock---what is the
deed ?"
"A frightful one---so desperate, that even *thou*
Spite of thy firmness---yet must wear an ashen
brow !
I doubt thee not---I know thy valour well,
And yet---this deed, so horrid is---so fell---
That it must freeze thy blood, and chill
Thy very soul ! Thou art a lover---spite
Of all---thou lovest the false one still !
And softer feelings with thy blame unite ;
But I---from sportive childhood's earliest hour, rear'd
In stern Adversity's rude arms---

I—who have climbed the rugged paths of life, un-
cheer'd

By luxury's alluring charms—

I—who have been rudely buffeted by Fate—

Oft torn from Fortune's highest, proudest state,

To sleep within her lowliest dungeon's gloom—

Within *my* harden'd breast—there is no room

For softer thoughts—and blood alone can slake the
fire,

Deep in my soul—whose raging ire,

Till quenched with gore—can never tire !

The deed may wring my very *heart*,

But to my *soul*—no pain impart—

The voice of *Honour* steels its smart ;

That heart may *break* beneath the stroke,

But cannot *bend*—nor tamely yoke

Its fierce proud will ;—and thou, too, wilt be bold ?

Not in thy mouth, alone, thy dagger hold,

But wear it nobly by thy side,

In good or ill, whate'er betide !”

IX.

“Alonzo, thou 'rt a son—yet, couldst thou see

The mother of thy tender infancy,

The watchful guardian of thy childhood's years,

Who gave, in joy---her smiles, in grief---her tears !

Who, when a stripling youth, has spurr'd thee on,

And taught how Glory's pinnacle is won---

Say, couldst thou see that mother desolate---for-
lorn---

Friendless, and injured---bleeding---crush'd---reviled
and torn---

Writhing in agonies of death---
Rather than feel dishonour's breath ?---
Thy look is firm---yet 't is worse ill
Than this---thy trial, greater still---
Like Isaac, couldst thou slay thy son,
If honour bade the deed be done ?”

“ I could ! Pelayo, 't is a soldier, and a soldier's son,
To whom you speak ; who, from his infancy, hath
look'd upon

Blood, as it were but water spilt,
While still his heart was free from guilt :
Thou know'st a warrior's honour---dear as life !
Unshaken as his courage mid the strife !”

“ 'T is well ! Alonzo thou 'rt indeed all that I
thought,
But list, thy *deeds* must speak, for, words I prize as
nought !”

X.

“ Thou know'st how well my sister was beloved ?
'T was she that all my gentler feelings moved!--
In my rude speech dwells not the glowing art
To paint the warm devotion of my heart ;
Enough, she was my pride---my all---my fond de-
light !
The subject of my hopes by day---my dreams by
night---
In childhood's hour---'t was mine to guide
Her falt'ring steps---to praise, or chide !
But when I saw the budding girl to woman grown,
And felt her fond heart throb responsive to my own;

What dearer joy, I ask'd, could e'er be known,
Than thus to see her matchless beauties dawn,
Like flow'rets opening to the sunny morn,
And yet---that sister pure and loved---that sister
fell !

I know not by what fiendish art was wrought the
spell*---

A struggle o'er the warrior's face
Was seen with darker thoughts---to chase
The colour from his cheek--his brow more moody
grew,

A momentary ray of agony, shot through

His eye ! his breath came quick,

He vainly strove to speak !---

'T was but a second---in such lordly breast,

All passions bear but fleeting sway,

Not he their slaves--his creatures, they---

And quickly vanquished at his stern behest ;---

Pelayo mann'd his bursting heart,

And bade the crowding thoughts depart ;

Then, quickly turning round, with firmer mien,

(Save a slight trace of anguish yet was seen,

That told how fearful must have been the thought

Which to his eye such maddening look had
brought)

He fiercely cried " her bridal 's in the tomb !

Nay, start not thus, nor turn so pale---her doom

* Sunk in superstition, as Spain was, at that period, Pelayo might well have supposed that this extraordinary change was brought about by some witchcraft or spell.

Is spoke---the tomb ! the tomb ! he shouted in wild
energy !

An *unpolluted* tomb my sister's nuptial couch
shall be !

The dirge of death, her marriage song---the cypress
bough,

The chaplet that her *brother* weaves to deck her
brow---

A cold, cold, wedding couch receives her charms,

But better than this heathen's swarthy arms ;

Why tremble thus---and shake thy head so mourn-
fully ?

It nought avails---Pelayo's sister dies to-day !

Ne'er was my steel unfaithful to my hand,

And now---unerringly that trusty brand

Shall do its work---to drink the foemen's gore it well
hath known,

But, soon 't will crimson o'er with blood far dearer
than my own ! ”

XI.

“ Yet when I taste the bowl revenge presents---
think not

Upon the bitter brim I stop---

No, quaff it all---the sweetest drop

Is hid beneath its gall---while yet my reeking hand

Is blushing with my sister's blood, the self-same
brand,

Deep in the traitor's heart---shall terminate

The crimes, not e'en that blood can expiate !

And from this only talisman, my trusty sword,

Long as my life endures---deep vengeance shall be
pour'd

Upon the hated infidels
 Whose arts have worked these hellish spells.
 And if *I* fall—yet do not quit the field ;
 Lead on the brave ! be *thou* our country's shield ;
 Should all be lost—to Covadonga fly—
 'T is there *my* valiant friends in ambush lie ;
 Thou canst divine the rest---the fatal hour is nigh,
 And list—I hear the tolling bell,
 It summons to the mosque—farewell !”
 We leave Alonzo—it were vain to tell
 The varying thoughts that in his bosom swell,
 Unless, within the “ sacred rill”
 Some guardian Muse would dip my quill.—

XII.

The bells ring forth a merry peal,
 Blythe strains of music, sweetly, steal
 Upon the ear—banners, and flags, and pennons gay
 Are glittering in the sunbeam's ray,
 The bridal train is on its way ;
 And hark ! the jovial minstrel choir
 To Hymen's strains attune each lyre :
 Alas ! to her, the queen of all ! in vain, they swell !
 In vain of joys long past—of future pleasures—
 tell !—
 The voice of melody may soothe an aching breast,
 Chase sorrow's frown, and lull the troubled mind to
 rest,
 But when hope's lovely smile hath fled,
 And left within its wither'd stead,
 The gnawing canker—and the broken heart
 What joy can music, melody, impart ?—

XIII.

The gorgeous train is moving near,
And first, within his iv'ry car,
All studded thick with jewels rare,
That glitter in the sun's bright glare,
The chief rides pompously !—
Why need I tell of warriors, in armour mailed, that
 grace
The scene—of polished shields reflecting many a gentle face,
 Beaming all smiles—for many there
 Were happy—even though despair
Sat on the brow of one—for youth and beauty still
 will sport
With pleasure's wand—e'en though it were in Rhadamanthus' court.—
The Christian princess, on a curtain'd litter borne,
Succeeds.—Bright costly gems, of every clime,
 adorn
Her victim charms---the silken couch with golden
 net-work hung,
And richly draperied with wreaths of snowy pearls,
 each, strung
In many a quaint device ;—on either side, six
 maids,
The gentlest, fairest flow'rets, of his harem's shades,
 With sandal'd feet, trip light along,
 The merriest of that august throng ;
Sweet perfumes from their golden censers rise,
In clouds of fragrance to the very skies ;

While, mingling with the music's strain, at ev'ry
bound

Their jewel'd anclet bells in silv'ry tinklings sound ;

But she—the bride—the fairest of that scene,

What recks she of the glitt'ring pageantry,

The studded turbans that around her gleam,

In one unbroken line of jewelry ?

Her thoughts, they are not there—her wand'ring
eye

Too truly speaks the hopeless misery

Deep in her breast—alas ! how oft we see,

'Mid splendour, pomp, and noisy revelry,

The broken heart, which jewels cannot hide ;

The laughing lip, which rather would have sigh'd ;

Her bloodless cheek outvies the snow,

And yet, a wild, unnatural glow

Illumes that dark eye with a brilliancy,

Whose rays but ill with those wan cheeks agree.

It seems more like a meteor's burning light,

Or the bright glances of an angel's sight,

Darted upon this world, in upward flight,

When mortal eyes—it matters not how beautiful
they be,

E'en in the fairest, still it were *unnatural* radiancy !

Her death-like features bore the iron mark

Of deep, corroding sorrow---where no spark

Of earthly hope was left !---Where is her beauty
fled ?

The joyous smile, and laughing cheek, the lip of
red ?—

The lily sleeps upon the rose's bed,

Its fragile stem is broke, its perfume fled !

Stern, ruthless Fate ! is this thy cruel deed ?
 Still wilt thou make the fondest heart to bleed ?
 And must thy throne still be the loveliest brow ?
 And wilt thou ever ravage, e'en as now ?
 Ah ! false one ! "*e'en as now*" echo repeats—
 Would it might prove this once, the proph'tess
 cheats.—

XIV.

Splendour, and Pomp, and Wealth, what are ye all ?
 A bubble bursting in the air—
 The rainbow, fading soon as seen—
 The glittering veil, that hides despair—
 The gilded wreck of what hath been—
 For broken heart, alone, the meetest pall !
 The light—the gay—the free—they need ye not—
 The smile of joy is e'en as bright, I wot,
 Without your aid—but, when that smile has fled—
 Then come in richest garb---your gaudy bed
 May shield, or hide---not *soothe* the aching heart.---
 When hands are joined---where souls are far apart,
 Your dazzling show may veil the gap---'t is well ;
 One purpose is assign'd---many can tell
 What else ye hide---be theirs the task ;
 I 'll to my tale---lest some should ask,
 "What means this pause ?" as Byron says,
 " a hard
 And hapless situation for a bard."

XV.

But whence hath come yon stripling boy,
That falters by Munuza's side ?
His look indeed speaks little joy,
To sorrow's frown more near allied ;
Not his the strong knit limbs, and noble mien,
That in the Moorish warrior's sons are seen ;
Those small white hands, so delicate, seem made
to grace
A gentle lady's bower—
Upon her snowy neck the sparkling diamonds place,
Or tune the minstrel's lyre,
To while each weary hour.
His slender foot for the gay dance
More meet appears, than following in the warrior's
train ;
The hectic flush upon his cheek now dries again,
Now wakes, at ev'ry passing glance ;
Those jetty eyes with lustre gleam, but, in their look
There is a restlessness, as though he could not brook
The scene—and, now, on Ormesinda's face
His dark glance rests—and now, it seems to trace
The thoughts beneath Munuza's smile ;
How pallid grows his cheek, the while,
He reads a something—that he thought to find—
Yet wishes 't were again in doubt enshrined ;
Why bursts the groan so deeply from his breast,
Why are his clenched hands so closely press'd,
As if he feared each swelling sigh would rend in twain
His panting heart—and show the thoughts he 'd
have remain

Forever hid ?—

They reach the mosque—the bride is at the altar
now—

Why trembles that young page? why mounts the
crimson glow

To neck and cheek—through his transparent skin
So clearly shown?—What struggles thus within,
And shakes and writhes his slender frame?

'T is past! pensive, though firm again,
He stands! like one who feels the last worst blow
is near,

Yet thinks conviction better, far, than anxious fear.

XVI.

The Moor and Christian at the altar stand,
(Like hell, and heaven, clasping friendly hand!)

And all are silent, mute as death,

The Goths suspend their very breath,
Till she shall speak!—Still, statue-like, unmoved,
She stood! Alas! how unlike one who loved!

Oh! plainly ev'ry Christian heart hath read,
In her changed cheek—her tott'ring frame—and
haggard eye—

And look so full of soul-despairing agony!

The jewel'd victim to the slaughter led!

And those, whose curses scarce are cold,

With mutter'd prayers, and sighs, behold:

And now she starts, gazes upon the Gothic throng,
And mournful waves her arm—a murmur runs along
The Christian band—why bursts that shriek, as from
her inmost heart?

Whence is that form she sees?—Yes—changed,
Alonzo, as thou art—

The eyes of love—they know thee—know thee
yet—

“’T were sure their hardest science to forget!”—

XVII.

The cruel Moor has heard that heart-wrung shriek,
Has seen the haggard cause—“By Allah’s
throne!”

He fiercely cries—“The hated Goth is here!
And dares the wretched captive thus obtrude
His presence on our holy rites?—Away
With him!—Guards seize the traitor—to the
block—

’T will cool his spirit’s fire”—

“Oh! touch him not!

Thy promise, Moor, is register’d in heaven!
Munuza! Munuza! think upon thy vow—
On her—who bids thee now remember it—
Nay, on my knees I beg”——

“Degen’rate maid!”

A lordly voice exclaim’d, that shook the mosque,
As by a thunder-peal, and made each heart
To throb, and eye turn on the lofty monk,
Who stood, majestic, ’neath a pillar’s shade!

“Shame, Ormesinda! never-dying shame
Light on thy brow! blight of thy royal race!
Is ’t not enough to bring dishonour on
Thy name—to rivet e’en in former bonds
Our chain—and must thou add this last disgrace,

To fill the measure of thy country's woes ?
That country, bleeding now in slavery !
Where is thy pride ? that at the tyrant's feet,
E'en here—before thy nation's face—you kneel ?
A curse on that degraded head—and if
It fall severer, from the tongue of him
Who oft hath bless'd—behold who curses thee !”

XVIII.

Away the cowl is flung—the monk's dress gone—
And the mail'd warrior stands forth, alone,
Dauntless amid the throng—from thousand tongues
burst forth the cry
Of “ Pelayo ! Pelayo ! Pelayo ! ” resounding to the
very sky !
The maiden shrieks with joy—the shouts of Christians
rend the air—
Th' astonish'd chieftain shakes with rage—the Moor-
ish swords swift glare
On high ! but the boldness stamp'd upon Pelayo's
brow,
And the haughty fire of his eye—well met their
glow !
What heart were strong enough to strike one
blow ?

XIX.

“ Pelayo, yes, is here ! Pelayo comes !
Beholds the last—most galling weight of all,
Fall on his head !—but *unavenged* it shall
Not fall ! while there is God above ! or hell
Below, for heart degraded, e'en as thine

Base maid! Oh! Ormesinda, once my pride—
My all! what witchery hath wrought this deed?"—

"Nay, brother—brother, cease! Oh! curse me
not!

Or curse—ay! with the self-same breath, e'er yet
It cools, thy country—thy lost country, too!
Those words, like keen-edged swords, pierce
through a heart,

Torn with conflicting sorrows, panting to
Be free—loosed from its earthly bonds—thou wilt
Not—canst not blame:—Know then, that 't is to
My country, that myself am lost—to save
His life, whose arm must shield that country well!
I thought *thee* dead—Alonzo still was left—
I sacrificed my name—my peace—my weal—
In other words, perhaps—ay, ay, thou know'st
It now—it was—yes, yes, it was—for *him*!"

XX.

She faltered—gasp'd—and ceas'd—but still those
wild

Eyes glared upon Pelayo's face—but fixed,
Like maniac's, stared on what they did not see—
While he—clasping the maid in ecstasy,
Close to his mailed breast—vainly essayed
To speak—till muttering, 'neath his clenched
teeth,

"Oh! this, indeed, lessens my grief! but 't is
Not yet enough—one blow—one more must fall!
The stain is wash'd away with *blood* alone."---

Then gazing fondly on those glassy eyes,
While yet she lay half senseless in his arms—

“Thou poor, deluded girl ! bitter, indeed,
Most bitter—is thy doom ! and he—who loves
Thee well—must add, alas ! another pang !
'T is the last time we meet, sweet sister of
My love !”—

“Yes, yes,” she cried in broken voice,
“The last—last time—e'en now the wing of death
Flaps darkly o'er my fleeting soul—e'en now---,
The radiant gate of heaven bursts upon
My view---I die---my brother ! oh ! my brother !”

And her slight frame convulsive shook within
His arms—Pelayo, starting, drew her from
His breast—and gazing on her pallid face,

“What mystery ! what dreadful mystery !
Is this ? The horrid paleness that o'erspreads
Thy cheek—the livid colour of thy lips—
Thy heavy sunken eyes' unnatural flame—
The sudden tremour of thy wasted frame ?”

“Pelayo ! oh ! my loved, my noble brother !
Dost thou so little know thy sister's soul ?
And couldst thou for a moment doubt my faith ?
Think'st thou that she—the warrior's sister—
could
Survive her *honour's* loss ? Oh, no ! Wrong not
That sister's heart—the *poison* is at work

Within my veins—and soon my wearied soul
Must seek its last, eternal home—but oh !
’T is bliss thus, thus to die ! untainted, pure,
And in my loved Pelayo’s shielding arm !”
Pelayo wildly caught her to his full—
His bursting heart—

“ My sister ! noble, blest,
Worthy, most worthy, of the name—’t is more
Of joy, than pain, to view thee thus ! How have
I wronged thy dear and loyal heart—I came
With purposed vengeance ! even, here, to shed
’Thy blood Nay, strive not thus to speak—
I see
My pardon, written in thy fading eyes.”—

XXI.

While thus, with joy, Pelayo views the maid,
Far other, bitter thoughts intrude within
Alonzo’s breast—he stands absorbed in grief,
Still vainly clinging to Hope’s phantom, e’en
When Hope herself, he knows—he feels—is fled !
The dying maiden caught his haggard eye,
And she had heard that soul-drawn, piercing cry,
Burst from his lips, when the rash deed was told,
Which rolled the dark gulf of eternity,
Between (at least) their earthly loves—and with
Her thin transparent hand, now cold in dews
Of death, she feebly beckons him to her side
And he—received her drooping head upon
His breast—and bent his ear to catch the tones
Now more than ever dear—too musical,
Too sweet, for even death’s dissev’ring shaft

To rob of melody, till with it, too,
The last, the parting breath, itself, had fled !

“ I die, Alonzo for my country, and
For thee---then nerve thy arm, for vengeance and
For me---Oh! sweet hath been our dream of love,
And fleeting, as 't was sweet! but death alone
Hath broke the chain---'t is better thus---farewell !
Wed thou another bride---thy *Country* calls---
Espouse *her*, and her wrongs---still cherish not
My mem'ry, but, to spur thee nobly on

“ I can no more---the poison chills my veins---
Thou 'rt fading from my view---oh, yet, I 'd have
Thee stay---My love ! 't is hard---how hard, to
part !

Brother, where art thou now ? Ah ! yes, I feel
Thy hand---the warrior gauntlet tells 't is thine ;
Brother, thou wilt not mourn when I am gone ?
Would that I still could cheer thy path---Ah ! no,
We part !---that word, more than the poison
wrings

My soul---adieu !---my country 't is for thee !”
She sunk o'erpower'd---but, as if a thought,
The last that ever cross'd her 'wilder'd brain,
Told something, yet, was unfulfill'd---again,
With momentary energy, she raised
Her head, and in a hollow, broken voice,
That trembled with emotion, said---“ Christians !
Vengeance ! and liberty ! 't is happy, thus
To die---Vengeance” the fleeting spark ex-
pired---

Just then, a golden beam of light, as 't were
Some rosy seraph's hailing smile, lit on
The noble maiden's face—her glazing eye
Was raised, to welcome the sweet sign—a ray
Of bright, angelic hope stole gently o'er
Her features—brightening the smile of death.
'T was in the radiance of that transient beam,
I ween, the uncaged spirit winged its flight !

XXII.

Alonzo held the cold weight in his arms, with horror
mute,

While e'en the savage Moor stood grieved—o'er-
whelmed—irresolute—

A spell was on the throng, nor lip, nor hand, nor eye,
Was moved—yet ev'ry beating heart throbbed au-
dibly !

But stern Pelayo—gazed one instant there—

Then, swift as the flash, his sword gleam'd in the
air !

Upon Munuza furiously he rushed,

And forth the warm life's blood in torrents gush'd ;
Where'er the steel of that brave warrior fell,

'T was execution quickly done—and well !

But not *Munuza's* heart had felt how fatal—sure—
its blow,

The *page's* form arose, between him—and his foe—

From that young breast the blood-gouts flow !

He sinks upon the earth—and lo !

The casque falls from his head, and all around
His long dark hair, along the crimsoned ground,

In showers floats—Munuza starts appall'd—Ah ! does
he know

Those ringlets wave—that banish'd face—so changed,
and ghastly, now—

The name so long forgot ?—the beauteous *Aza* lies;
All bleeding, at his feet !—but still those fond dark
eyes,

E'en in their dying beam, are turn'd

Forgivingly on him—who spurned !

She loved—her first love—and her last—

She came to die—the pang is past—

For death was sweet while in *his* breast

No *living* rival is a guest !

Her small hand, close above her bleeding heart,

Is press'd—but where the taper fingers part,

The-blood drops burst—'t is vain ! she cannot
stay

Their course, or scarce the fleeting soul delay !

XXIII.

And did the bold Pelayo stop that dismal scene to see ?

No, while Munuza viewed the victim of his cruelty

Again, he waved his bloody brand aloft

Again, with giant sweep it fell !—but soft,

Another steel, another arm, has caught the blow,

The chief was roused, and turned like lion on his
foe,

Now foot, to foot, and hand, to hand,

The Moor and Christian fight ;

'T was strange and awful sight !

For mingling with the clashing brand,

The voice of that young dying girl arose,
In bitter imprecations on his foes,
Who long had been a foe to her—the bane
Of all her earthly peace, and spotless name.
'T was seldom warriors met, in strength and
power,

Like those, who fought upon that fearful hour ;
For ev'ry feature, ev'ry limb, partook the strife ;
And on a thread—a hair alone—each desperate life
Seem'd hung—short space they wrestled thus—
't is done !

The chieftain falters—on, Pelayo, on !
That furious blow—hath laid him low—
Stretch'd on the ground he welters in his blood !
Pelayo o'er the fallen warrior stood,
And furious, brandishing his sword on high, he cried,
“ For Ormesinda, this !—this ! for my country's
pride—

This ! this ! for all thy guilt !”

And thrice, e'en to the hilt,

'T was buried in the traitor's heart !

But, ere his untamed soul could part,
He raised his dying arm to give one mortal stroke,
And in the very act the thread of life was broke !

The arm fell, stiff'ning, as 't was raised,

The eyes, still fiercely shining, glazed,

A fiendish look yet lingered on the dark grim face,
Not e'en the death-pang could his soul's last
thoughts efface ;

Young Aza saw her lover fall !—it broke the shatter'd
chain,

That bound *her* to the earth—with one last throb of
love, and pain,

Her cold damp lips to his, convulsively, she press'd,
And breathed her gentle spirit forth upon his breast!

XXIV.

Not there the warrior paused to gaze ; his crimson'd hand

Waved high above his head the reeking brand,

He turned, with flashing eye, upon the band

And loudly shouted, " Christians ! strike, for liberty !

" Abajo, á los Moros ! Death or victory !"

Sudden, the spell that bound them broke !

The thunderbolt had burst ! awoke

Each slumb'ring soul—and bounded every heart—

A thousand vengeful swords, in fury, start

From their sheaths—the cries of Moor and Christian
rend the air—

Like mighty waves, that rise and fall in the sun-
beam's glare,

Their weapons gleam !—E'en as the swollen torrents
burst their banks---

With all the fury of revenge and hate—in broken ranks,
To the combat, on, impetuously they rushed !

With ev'ry blow the blood of warriors gush'd !

So deadly—sure—the aim—

So furious, the flame

That raged in every breast ;—the deafening clamour
rang

Around—and mingling with the dread and jarring
clang

Of clashing arms—and dying groans—

And women's shrieks—and sinners' moans—

Shook all---e'en to its very base---

The mosque, that consecrated place :---

It seemed as though the fellest fiends of hell,
Were loosed with that one loud, terrific yell,
That burst from the Moorish lips !

XV.

And by Pelayo's side that warrior see,
Who, reckless, fights, so bravely, furiously !
Hate and revenge depicted on his face,
Where former weakness now has left no trace ;
At ev'ry stroke, a Moor must " bite the dust !"
But ah ! see, from behind, a cowardly thrust
Has pierced him to the heart---he turns---one desp'-
rate blow

Deals---ay ! and *fatally*---upon his foe,
Then sinks upon the crimson'd earth below !
His lips yet mutter, in their dying groan
" Revenge ! Revenge ! on, my brave comrades,
on ! "

He writhes in death---a mist is gathering o'er his
eyes---

He gazes on the form beside him---gasps---and
dies !

Thy bridal wreath is sprinkled with his gore---
Princess ! thy *lover's* blood hath spouted o'er
Its snowy whiteness !---by *thy* side he fell,

Near *thy* cold corpse gasp'd out his last farewell !
But all is meet---the clash of arms thy requiem
play'd,

Around thy death-couch brightly gleams the foe-
man's blade,

Blood are the tear-drops o'er thee shed,
And crimson'd is thy dying bed !---

XVI.

Fiercely the contest rages, still—blood flows
In rushing streams—the scene of carnage is
Terrific—Ah ! dost see ? some daring hand
The Gothic standard rears !—on ev'ry side
Resounds the thrilling cry of “ Liberty !”
“ Abajo !” “ Down with the Moor !” “ The
traitors fly !”—

Pelayo's voice above the rest is heard,
Like the trumpet's lordly blast amid the beat
Of drums—“ To the mountains, Goths ! to the
mountains ! there

Our stronghold lies—let ev'ry loyal Goth
Now follow me, to that young cradle of
Our new-born Liberty ! the tyrant's blood
Crimsons my sword—and, here, I swear ! till each
Black soul shall flee, or bend the knee before
Our conquering arms—it well shall drink the gore
Of thousands more—away ! my friends, away !
Let Ormesinda's name impel you on—
The wild—the rugged rocks—shall be our home ;
Better—oh ! better—nobler—far, they be,
Than purple canopies, and slavery !”

XXVII.

The sinking sun is shining still on Deva's placid
stream,
Where the rude clank of arms is heard, and shields of
warriors gleam,
Like diamonds, scatter'd through the trees—but slow,
with heavy tread

They march—with muffled drum—down pointed swords
—and bended head—

And sable plumes, that wave above the dead !
In Covadonga's glen, where, oft, the tuneful strain,
Of that young bride of death was breathed—resound
again

The stifled groans that burst from her funeral
train !

And where her young, glad heart, cloudless and pure,
at each new morn,

Had danced with joy ! the maiden, now a blood-
stained corpse, is borne !

And bridal dress, and wreath, are blushing with the
crimson flow

That poured, in purple gushing stream, alike, from
friend and foe :

Laid by her side, the form of one who lived and died
Alone for her !—their spirits are again allied.—

Yet is 't a mournful scene ! and, e'en the soldier's
sun-burnt cheek

Is glistening with wayward tears, that more than vo-
lumes speak.

But 't is no time for grief—together they are laid,
And a rude chapel built within that sunny glade,
To tell that Mary, virgin mother, watch'd above
Those, who were guided by her purity and love !

The funeral obsequies are o'er ;

Each warrior heart itself once more ;

And now, with one accord, a thousand voices hail
Pelayo, king of Covadonga's lovely vale !—

Nought will I tell of pomp and ceremony's sway—
No time for ceremony's empty pomp had they—

While varying emotions struggled in his breast,
The brave Pelayo thus his comrades address'd :—

XXVIII.

“ My noble friends ! ’t is not a crown of gold
You place upon my head, but rather one
Of iron mould ! for, pleasure, wealth, and ease,
Whose luring smiles so oft delude the great,
And make a mockery of the warrior’s state,
Amid these wilds, these solitary rocks,
How can they come !—but danger, peril, toil,
A warrior, true to his country’s weal, accepts,
My loyal friends, from you ;—and, here I pledge—
All that is left me now—my honour, and
My liberty ! never, while life remains,
To cease the direst, fellest war, against
These hellish Moors—and, never will I know
Another canopy, than this blue heaven,
Another palace than these rugged rocks,
Until our hated thralls are burst, and we—
E’en in the widest sense—are free ! vengeance
Within my soul can never sleep—and die—
’T were better that myself and ye were dead !
My hatred to the Moors is lasting—deep—
And they most bitterly shall curse the day
That made Pelayo—e’en ’mid wilds—a king !—
My God ! my country ! and my sister ! all,
Shall have revenge !—this valley long shall be
Renown’d in after days—as birth-place of
Our liberty !—behold our fortress ! all
We need—the hand of bounteous nature well

Hath made--what ask ye more ? and oh ! when-
e'er

Fond fancy brings my sainted sister back
To life again, and paints her, as ye oft
Have seen, the gentle queen of all around,
Happy amid these rocks, and pure as happy !
Ah ! when the scene is changed---and she ap-
pears---

Ay, e'en that timid maid---a *martyr* to
Her country's wrongs---will it not nerve your
arms,

And spur ye on ?---Christians ! ye who yet bear
That proudest name---ye who aspire to
Your sires deathless fame---within whose breast
The patriot's heart beats high---complete your
work !

Let cries of ' Freedom ! ' rend the sky---nor
cease

The strife, until these cursed chains are rent,
And not one hateful shackling link remains !
Redeem your rights ! your country and your home
Redeem ! let not the yoke of slavery
Pollute your country's fame ! does not that name---
That very name---arouse the latent flame ?
Wake, then---and wake to vengeance deathless---
fierce !

Be Christians---patriots---freemen---once again !"

XXIX.

While still he spoke, a light divine,
Far in the depths of that blue mine

Above his head, shone gloriously !---like thousand me-
teors' ray

Shaming to pallid hue—the roseate brightness, e'en of
day—

And lighted mountain, cliff, and tree,
Till all appear'd one sparkling sea
Of bright, unearthly radiancy !
And in that glow---a cloud of snow—
Tinted with gold and silver hue,
And circled with a ridge of blue,
Nearer, and nearer, stoops to earth !

In the midst, a form of heavenly birth,
Half hid by rainbow light---through mists half seen---
Crown'd with a diadem of stars---that gleam
As 't were alone to dazzle with their beam---

Appears ! and forth an arm of marble white
Is stretch'd ! and, in the hand, a cross glows
bright !

The token falls, just at Pelayo's feet ;
And in a tone, oh ! more than music sweet,
A voice exclaims—" Thy country's wrongs es-
pouse ;

The Virgin hears, acknowledges thy vows !"
Slowly, again, the cloud is borne away,
While lightning flashes brightly round it play !
A strain of heavenly music from above
Resounds—as, in some bright Elysian grove,
The distant angel choir, in tones of love,
(Such as to mortals ne'er are given)
Welcome the Virgin back to heaven !*

* Southey relates in his notes to Don Roderick, that the ancient Spaniards believed the Virgin Mary appeared to Pelayo in a cloud.

XXX.

The Virgin's mystic gift hath not proved vain,
Before that cross the foes, or fled, or were ta'en—

And ne'er did Pelayo to battle ride,

But that heavenly symbol shone by his side.*

Reader! if Spain's fair lands thy steps should
tread,

If to Covadonga's cave thy way be sped,

Thou yet mayst see a chapel worn and rude,

Where few, save they of other climes, intrude,

And though with moss and ivy leaves o'ergrown,

Not yet hath Time its ruined base o'erthrown ;

With gentle hand he hath passed by,

Where in one tomb the lovers lie !

More lightly hath he stepp'd above their graves,

Where yet the blooming flow'ret brightly waves.---

And shouldst thou chance to hear Pelayo's name,

Thou 'lt find it now, and ever, e'en the same

Revered, as it was wont to be ;

The watch-word still to liberty !

XXXI.

Kind reader ! but one moment more attend,

My lengthy tale hath wound it to an end ;

* The oaken cross which Pelayo bore in battle, is said to have been preserved at Oviedo, in the Camara Santa, in company with that which the angels made for Alfonso the Great, concerning which Morales delivers a careful opinion how much of it was made by the angels, and how much has been human workmanship. The people of Cangas unwilling that Pelayo's cross should be in any thing inferior to his successors, insist that it fell from heaven. It was covered with gold and enamel in the year 908 ; when Morales wrote it was in fine preservation, and doubtless so continued till the present generation.

Southey's Notes to Don Roderick.

“ ’T were to be wished that it were sooner done,
But stories sometimes lengthen when begun ;”
And yet, I cannot leave my pleasing theme,
Offspring of many a happy hour’s dream,
And launch my unpretending lay upon the world’s
 gay tide,
A little bark, without---or name---or pilot hand, to
 guide
And guard it gently on its billowy way,
And chase the critic’s frowns that round it stray,
Nor give a parting word to those (though few they be)
 who deign
To listen to the first weak touches of my humble
 strain ;
But—since the chords have waked to please their
 ear,
Oh ! sure they cannot look with eye severe ?
More I would say—but my full heart
Feels, now, too much, *all* to impart,
And e’en my muse grows coy, as if she knew
That, for the present, I must bid, adieu !
Already hath she raised in flight her silvery wing,
’T is vain to bid her stay, she ’s such an airy thing !
She says to me—what I, alas ! must tell,
And whisper with her voice—“ We part—Fare-
 well ! ”

END OF CANTO SIXTH.



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